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Stretch the Edge

Design Driven Processes for Reactivating
Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas

Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino
Antico Monastero Santa Chiara, San Marino
22-23.06.2023

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(Eds.)
Giorgio Dall'Osso
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STRETCH THE EDGE



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University Network

Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino Dipartimento di Economia Scienze, Ingegneria e Design

The Research Unit in 'Community Design' joins together researchers and experts in the field of design. It imagines and develops system strategies and new design actions that have environmental, cultural, economic and social impacts in the contexts in which they operate.

Through tools and practices typical of the design field, the team proposes research and project actions to support local communities in the identification and enhancement of resources and tangible and intangible common assets.

Thanks to participatory and collaborative processes, using open source languages and digital tools, we work alongside the actors of the process in the valorization of their assets, generating greater awareness among citizens and institutions.

Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna Dipartimento di Architettura — Advanced Design Unit

Advanced Design Unit is a community of educators, researchers, and experts dedicated to project cultures and their continuous innovation. It operates within the University of Bologna, in the Department of Architecture, pursuing the following objectives:

- University teaching and advanced training
- Scientific, theoretical, and applied research
- Consulting, dissemination, and engagement with local communities.

Advanced Design is configured as a research methodology that approaches design in systemic, participatory, and relational terms, focusing on processes related to the industrial, cultural, and social dimensions. It prioritizes a responsible and sustainable approach, constantly seeking original, challenging, and cross-sectoral themes. By observing and studying the changes in society and the planet, design cultures become active and transformative agents within contemporary contexts.

Beijing City University

Beijing City University (BCU) is a comprehensive university officially approved by Chinese Ministry of Education. Founded in 1984, BCU is the first new-type university in the public-owned and non-governmental system since the founding of the People's Republic of China, renowned for its innovation and vitality.

BCU has several campuses offering over 70 specialties under the disciplines of Science, Engineering, Arts, Law, Finance, Economics, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, Management and others; over 21,000 full-time students and 2,000 teaching and administrative staff.

BCU lays emphasis on broadening teachers' and students' international horizon, and has been committed to alliances with more than 50 colleges and universities abroad. International exchange programs have been established in the target countries and regions for BCU students in various discipline programs. Meanwhile, an array of students are awarded financial supports every year to expand their academic and cultural scope.

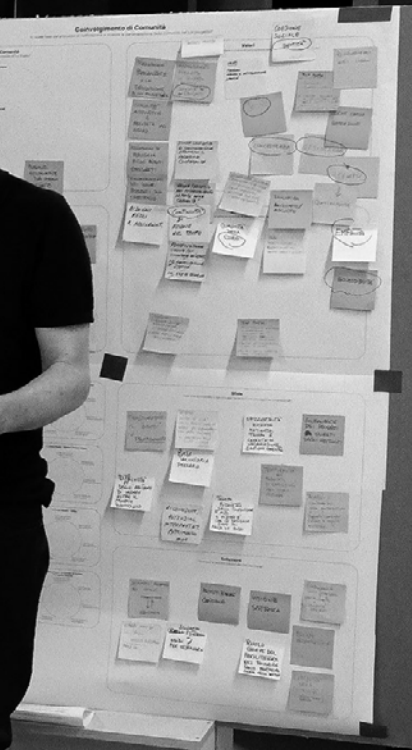
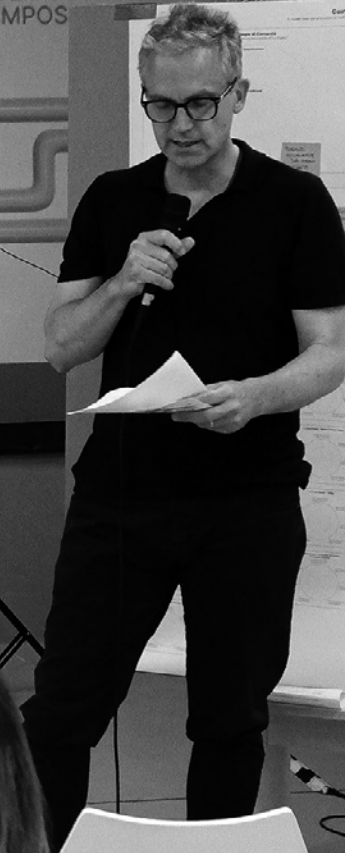
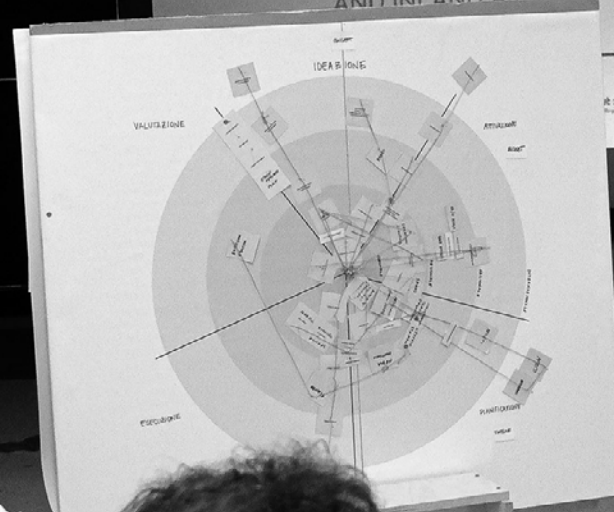
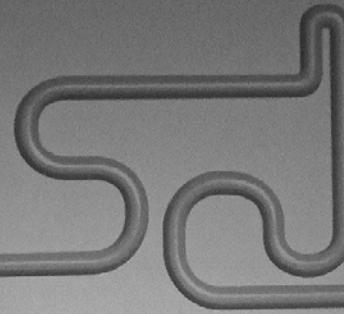
In order to better promote the cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world, we have jointly established 2 Confucius Institutes in the Republic of San Marino, Europe and the United Mexican States, North America respectively. Since 2015, BCU starts recruiting international students. Now every year, students come from different countries to study in BCU for a short or long period of time.

STRETCH THE EDGE

22—23 JUNE 2023,
SAN MARINO

INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM

DESIGN DRIVEN
PROCESSES
FOR REACTIVATING
SMALL WALLED TOWNS
AND INI AND AREAS



The Symposium

Stretch the Edge — Design Driven Processes for Reactivating Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas was an international symposium held at the Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino (Antico Monastero Santa Chiara) on June 22–23, 2023. It was promoted by the Research Units in Design of the Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino, the Advanced Design Unit of the Department of Architecture at Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, and Beijing City University.

The event explored how design can serve as a valuable tool for reactivating territories located in inland areas, enclosed by natural or artificial barriers. These territories, due to their size, morphology, and environmental or anthropic characteristics, often face significant challenges. However, their unique attributes also grant them a strong identity, making them socially, economically, and environmentally attractive. The values of uniqueness and identity represent tangible opportunities for natural, urban, and rural development. As such, they must be enhanced, revalued, reinterpreted, and systematized in future processes of repopulation and community settlement — with the goal of transforming these territories into multi-species and inter-species ecosystems, tangible places of sustainable living.

Sixteen international case studies — in which design played a central role in reactivation and regeneration — were presented in three sessions. These sessions were moderated by Raffaella Fagnoni, Full Professor at Luav University of Venice; Daniele Fanzini, Full Professor at Politecnico di Milano; and Claudio Gambardella, Full Professor at Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli.

Each session was introduced by a keynote speaker: Helena Casanova, architect and author of *Public Space Acupuncture*; Agostino Riitano, cultural manager and director of *Pesaro Italian Capital of Culture 2024*; and Pablo Sendra, architect, Associate Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, and co-author (with Richard Sennett) of *Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City*.

The symposium opened with the presentation of a mapping of 150 national and international case studies. This collection was compiled through contributions from a network of international researchers and professionals who responded to a call, submitting effective examples where design interventions impacted circumscribed spatial contexts. The case studies were organized in an online database, shared with the network before the symposium. The presentation addressed both the theoretical framework that emerged and an analysis of the collected data.

A parallel activity, conducted before and after the symposium, involved the establishment of three working groups — 'Reactivation Strategies,' 'Community Engagement,' and 'Networked Territories'. These groups were aimed at fostering a spirit of

knowledge-sharing and discussion, strengthening the network, and increasing stakeholder participation in debates on specific issues. The discussions were preceded by the sharing of case studies and best practices. This initiative, structured in two meetings — one online and one onsite — was intended to examine key aspects of the diverse reactivation efforts undertaken by practitioners, academics, and communities. The goal was to encourage collective reflections and develop conceptual frameworks. The working groups explored issues, approaches, and objectives related to engaging different types of communities (both onsite and online) in the reactivation of small fortified towns and inland areas. Particular attention was given to the tools through which design facilitates community engagement (e.g., participatory activities, co-design, etc.) and the stages of the design process in which these tools are employed.

One of the goals of the symposium was to amplify diverse perspectives. Academics, professionals, members of public agencies and administrations, associations, and volunteers all had the opportunity to share their knowledge, insights, and experiences in this setting.

These proceedings bring together the work conducted by the research team, with contributions of the participants of the working groups and those of the speakers. These contributions are presented in two formats: 'Research Papers', which showcase research activities, and 'Stories', which are short fact sheets describing the case studies presented during the two-day symposium.

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Community Renewal Design

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Un Viaggio nel Passato. Il Castello
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Saverio Simone

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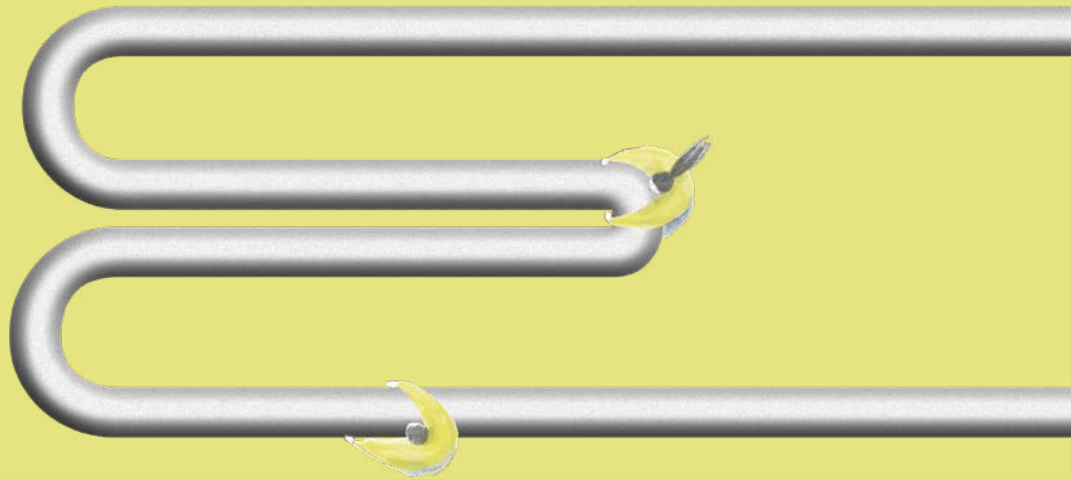
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Beginning with the session Join the Edges, this contribution presents a reflection on how traces can be used as design tools to reframe the relationship between people and places. Territories and the places that shape them are the result of evolving interactions between natural conditions, human settlements, and socio-cultural dynamics. Rather than fixed constructs, they emerge through historical layering, where nature and artifice, spontaneity and intentionality, continuously negotiate meaning. The identity of a place crystallises over time through three interdependent variables: the natural landscape, its inhabitants, and the material and immaterial artefacts that accumulate and interact.

Understanding and communicating the identity of a place thus requires more than representing visible features; it demands a reading of the relationships between layers. These relationships—often intangible—are the carriers of distinctiveness and collective memory. The metaphor of 'Joining the edges' encapsulates this act of reconnection: between spatial fragments, between people and environments, between physical reality and imagined narratives. In this context, design emerges as a mediating practice capable of reweaving disjointed or marginalised elements.

The contributions and projects presented at the Join the Edges session explore how design can activate traces, amplify situated identities, and facilitate immersive experiences. These traces, whether architectural, symbolic, or procedural, function as connectors—linking people to places, past to future, digital to physical, and local histories to broader cultural frameworks.

Frazer's law of contact, or contagion, posits that objects once in contact retain a metaphysical connection even after physical interaction has ceased. This principle underscores the necessity of maintaining a balance between the real and the imagined, the authentic and the constructed, ensuring that lived experiences are not overshadowed by illusion or virtualization, which often commodify transient realities.

The concept of 'trace', understood as a tangible or intangible marker that can activate perceptual, emotional, and narrative responses, is at the heart of a research developed in 2017, with Space spa, the INTUIT¹ project. It introduced a methodological framework for the experiential modelling of cultural tourism destinations. Traces act as hinges between reality and imagination—evocative elements that spark memories, atmospheres, and associations. In doing so, they contribute to the construction of the perceived *genius loci*. The project aimed to move beyond conventional tourism dynamics, shifting from passive consumption to active, immersive experience. Design played a central role as a mediating tool, used to articulate and enhance the identity of places through the definition of experiential templates. These templates were developed to respond to both pre-existing and emerging spatial narratives, using design as a means to structure and guide interaction.

To analyse the complex relationship between the physical and symbolic dimensions of place, INTUIT employed a set of dichotomous parameters. Five key dichotomies were identified: 'stimulus/memory', 'sign/meaning', 'presence/memory', 'event/narration', and 'place/symbol'. Each one was conceived as a cause-effect relationship, enabling the mapping of how real-world stimuli

¹
INTUIT - Immaginazione, Narratività, Teatralizzazione dei luoghi: esperienza Utente e Internet of Things Report D1.4. Teatralizzazione dei centri storici delle Minor Cities Italiane P.O. FESR Sardegna 2007-2013.

produce imagined responses. These parameters function as tools for interpreting how specific elements—such as sound, scent, or architecture—can activate broader experiential effects including myths, atmospheres, and a sense of belonging. The project further developed a system for evaluating experiential intensity through the 5 Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs): ‘Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate’. A Likert scale was adopted to quantify levels of engagement and to associate each context with one of three experiential paradigms: ‘receptive’, ‘multisensory’, and ‘participatory’. This method allowed for a comparative analysis of how design interventions might foster varying degrees of immersion and interaction. The theoretical foundation of this framework draws from experiential design and spatial semiotics. In the first, space is conceived not as a neutral container but as a stage for meaningful, affective interactions (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), with design seen as the orchestration of immersive scenarios and atmospheres. In parallel, the semiotics of space, developed by Eco (1976) and Lefebvre (1991), interprets the built environment as a system of signs shaped by social and cultural codes. Within this framework, the trace becomes a key element: a remnant of presence and a potential for re-signification. Combining these perspectives, the designer is reframed as a mediator of meaning and experience, capable of interpreting existing traces and activating them through new spatial narratives. The methodology was tested through twenty case studies, distributed across four typologies—micro, middle, macro, and hyper-locations—selected for their relevance to local economies, use of immersive technologies, and potential for experiential design. Each case was analysed through the lens of the five dichotomous parameters and positioned within one of the three experiential paradigms. Rather than proposing a prescriptive model, the INTUIT framework suggests a situated approach that enables designers to read, interpret, and modulate the relationship between people and place.

The trace-based approach provides a mighty framework for analysing the projects presented in the Join the Edges session. By linking design practice with contextual interpretation, it establishes a flexible methodology for the reactivation of territories through situated and meaningful interventions.

The first contribution presents the *Tremona-Castello Archaeological Park*. It is an indicative case study of the experiential paradigm of the *receptive* typology, proposing integration of Augmented and Virtual Reality technologies. While it enhances educational engagement and expands museological practice, it also raises questions about the risk of diminished presence and reduced dialogue with the physical site.

The project of *Digital Civic Collection Quero Vas* adopts an approach that allies itself with the *participatory* experiential paradigm. By co-creating a distributed archive rooted in community memory, the project fosters belonging, supports local governance, and offers a model for collective cultural programming in rural contexts.

The project of the *Jiming Island Wedding Hall* operates within the ‘multisensory’ paradigm. Reinterpreting vernacular typologies and ceremonial hierarchies, it constructs a spatial narrative that honours traditional rituals while generating social and economic value in the local context. The urban renewal initiative in *Beijing’s Xingfeng sub-district* repo-

sitions planning as a dialogic process, foregrounding civic engagement over top-down transformation. The project demonstrates how adaptive, human-centred strategies can generate cohesion through iterative cycles of research, evaluation, and implementation.

Taken together, these case studies illustrate how traces—be they architectural, digital, symbolic, or social—can serve as generative tools for reactivating fragmented contexts. The critical contribution lies not in the production of form, but in the orchestration of experiences that restore agency to both inhabitants and territories.

In a moment marked by ecological uncertainty, cultural erosion, and spatial homogenisation, rejoining the edges becomes an act of resistance. Design has the potential to mediate between past and future, locality and globality, the visible and the latent, enabling new ecologies of meaning grounded in situated experience.

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Designing an Expanded Shared Memory: The Civic Digital Collection of Quero Vas

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Abstract

The research project *Quero-Vas: Active Itineraries among Traces of Memories* (2022–2023) explores strategies for socio-economic and cultural development in the specific area. Collaborating with the Municipality of Quero Vas, the research design team of the Università Iuav di Venezia aims to integrate territorial enhancement with community engagement, including both the tangible and intangible local heritage. Grounded in the disciplines of Social Innovation, Service Design, and Design for Territorial and Local Development, the project begins by mapping the area's physical and cultural assets. The research emphasizes the need to involve residents, combining in-person and digital community-building efforts to foster a renewed territorial identity. The project's key output is the creation of a Civic Digital Collection, an open archive for preserving and sharing collective memory through citizen participation and multimedia storytelling and for local empowerment and cohesion.

Keywords

Design for territories
Community empowerment
Collective memory
Open archive

Research Field

The paper presents part of the outcomes of the annual research project (October 2022 – October 2023) *Quero-Vas: Active Itineraries among Traces of Memories*. The Municipality of Quero Vas located in the province of Belluno, Veneto Region, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Università Iuav di Venezia, an institution entirely oriented towards education and research in design at different scales, aiming to expand its action beyond providing adequate public services and meeting the everyday demands of citizens. The design team has therefore worked to assist local governance in defining strategic plans that can have tangible applications, anticipating the socio-economic and cultural impact of implementing collaborative strategic projects (Bosco et al., 2024).

The research project is contextualized within the framework identified by Parente and Sadini (2017), in the specific areas of *Social Innovation and Service Design*, *Design for Territorial and Local Development*, and *Design for Cultural Heritage*.

It positions itself within the scientific field of *Design for Territorial and Local Development*, with the aim of creating opportunities for social development hinging on a shared memory, pursuing the enhancement of tangible and intangible assets, based on cultural and environmental features that have yet to be the subject of intervention.

The research started with an initial mapping of the existing tangible and intangible heritages which revealed that Quero Vas memory is still linked to the tragedy of World War I, testified by monuments and mausoleums (Toneguzzi, 2019), that only partially mirror the present multifaceted community. A deeper analysis highlighted other strategic assets for the enhancement of the territory through the engagement of resident citizens and communities gravitating to the area. Their involvement, along with the identification of key heritage sites, serves as the foundation for creating a renewed territorial identity — one that citizens can relate to and that can also attract tourists and visitors (Christillin & Greco, 2021).

The collaborative work with citizens followed a series of gatherings with the design research team and the governance — the mayor, consultants in architecture and engineering, cultural promoters. The in-situ meetings highlighted the need to identify tools capable of building a common ground to facilitate internal communication, with the aim of understanding the feasibility of the design proposals. The research activity found support in the selection of current Italian case studies. The process led the design researchers to play the role of critical observer, and mediator capable of proposing actions whose main objective is to reconstruct virtuous relationships between the territory and the community on which they can base economically, socially and environmentally sustainable projects (De Varine, 2005; Stabellini & Tamborrini, 2018).

Material and Immaterial Values of the Territory

The analysis of local peculiarities was based on detailed observations of both its geographical specificities and the traces of the activities carried on in place. On the one hand, it focused on the morphological conformation, the landscape, the presence and arrangement of urban aggregates by consulting maps and bibliographic sources, and conducting on-site surveys. On the other hand, it investigated the past and the current ways of living, habits and activities that take and/or took place in the area through interviews, meetings with stakeholders, visits to the area.

The first line of investigation highlighted that the territory hosting the settlements of Quero and Vas is marked by natural morphological boundaries such as the presence of numerous watercourses, and it is surrounded by chains of hills that separate urban settlements situated at different altitudes. The villages, located in a basin of the Piave River valley, extending from Campo to Alano di Piave and divided by the floodplain, are characterized by similar historical and environmental features. They are situated in mid-mountain areas under large ridges and are mainly the result of postwar reconstruction coinciding with the economic boom in the 1950s (Dalla Caneva, 2019). They are situated near the regional road SR348 Feltrina and the Piave River, which are both important historical and current connection routes. Despite their proximity to these major axes, the centers are not visible to passersby.

The second line of investigation showed that for the most part daily work, production, and leisure activities take place outside the centres, leading residents to drive along the regional road SR348 Feltrina towards the cities of Feltre in the north and Montebelluna in the south. The surveyed area, which is only partially frequented during working hours, remains the terrain where residents live their private and family lives, visiting the same public places such as squares, parks, mountain and riverside paths and gathering places, participating in collective events such as festivals and fairs. The territory is also qualified by a natural rock climbing wall which is frequented today by hikers and climbers who mostly come from far away to organize seasonal gatherings.

Regarding communities that patronised the place in the past, Quero and Vas was once a summer tourist destination for wealthy Venetian families, as evidenced by several architecturally valuable buildings, now belonging to local families or abandoned. A further extension of the traces of past habits concerns the communities that emigrated from the Piave Valley: mass migrations of labour specialized in the management of forests or coal mines in past centuries and, more recently, the emigration of individuals in search of professions not found in the territory. The latter are paralleled by the online activation of social groups that demonstrate the strong connection of people with the territory and their roots.

Thanks to this deep local observation, the research team highlighted that the central factors for the enhancement of the area are the quality of the environmental features together with the people and their experience on the territory, their customs, habits and rituals, which contribute to generating a shared and collective memory.

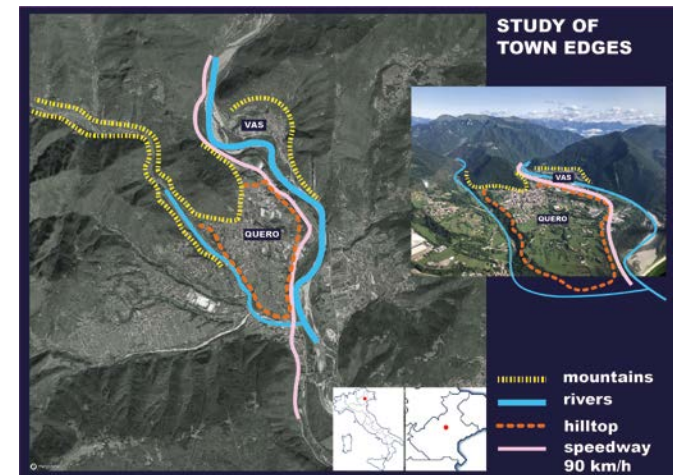


Fig. 1
Study of town edges from satellite and aerial views by Mario Ciaramitaro.

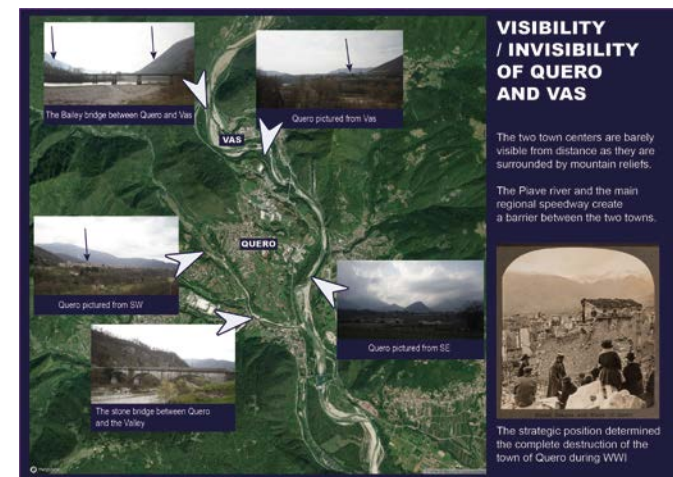


Fig. 2
Study of the towns' visibility/invisibility from the main road by Mario Ciaramitaro.



Fig. 3
Mapping both the territory and the online communities underlined the different bubbles and memories shared on social media by Mario Ciaramitaro.

In such a context, collective memory emerges organically from the memories and cultural behaviours of individuals. Like individual memory, it is dynamic and characterized by a continuous process of remembering, reconstructing, and sharing experiences (Assmann, 2001; Bosco et al., 2022; Bonini Lessing, 2023).

In recent decades, the experiential collective memory that distinguishes and unifies a community has found an extension of its sources in the development and spread of social channels. Online communities, no longer defined by their geographical origin, are given further possibilities to anchor their experiences and perspectives, and to organise in-person meetings or virtual agoras.

The research, focused on the enhancement of extended collective memory, can give voice to both types of described communities and can promote closer relationships between governance, citizens and online visitors. The recent merger of the municipality of Quero Vas with that of Alano di Piave into the new administrative district of Setteville highlights the need for the research project, giving voice to a unique multi-faceted community.

Reference Case Studies

Observation and in-depth study guided the team in the design of a digital collection of archival materials dedicated to a 'memory ecosystem' capable of serving residents and guests.

Although the goals of the research project were clear within the vision of the team, the collaborative dynamics of the project made it essential to introduce a phase of shared goal-setting and outcome projection to the governance and the stakeholders (Bosco et al., 2024). The research was further supported by the selection of ongoing Italian projects which were presented to them as case studies. Each case study was selected for the objectives, methods and tools adopted for their development. They helped to clarify the criteria we were aiming to apply in the research project, and they turned out to be a useful basis for discussion with the Municipality.

Criteria related to the specific objectives of the projects:

- A The pursuit of cultural goals not oriented toward solving cogent problems;
- B A willingness to bring out the values of the community;
- C The involvement of local stakeholders;
- D The projection toward a renewed imagery of place based also on a narration of the territory and landscape.

Criteria related to the methods and tools adopted for the development:

- E The organization of participatory activities on- and offline;
- F The enhancement of both analog and digital resources;
- G The choice to adopt user-friendly tools;
- H The structuring of a system based on a participatory, open and implementable repository over time.

Salviamo la Luna is a collaborative public art project commissioned to German artist Jochen Gerz in 2005 by the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan). The project spanned two years and involved the museum and the local community through meetings, guided tours, and photography sessions that led to the creation of 2,700 portraits of residents, which were displayed in an exhibition in the homes of the inhabitants. This case study is particularly interesting due to the participation of citizens both as subjects and as keepers of memory. However, as a one-time event that was not repeated, its memory has faded within the collective consciousness (Gerz & Balduzzi, 2008) (see points B, C, G).

Archivio Atena is a community project of the Municipality of Atena Lucana (SA), developed in collaboration with two artists to create a permanent workshop where cultural operators and public and private entities could meet. Funded in 2021 with public funds, it started by digitizing local cultural heritage and established a training center for documentation and archiving. In addition to training residents, the project included residencies for young photographers to create temporary exhibitions in public spaces. The research team valued this project for the way it organised community activities to collect analog materials and create a public archive. However, the archive is not digitally accessible and lacks interaction with social networks (La Rocca et al., 2023) (see points A, B, C, D, E).

OMNE, *Osservatorio Mobile Nord Est*, is an inter-institutional research center focused on studying contemporary landscapes through artistic works and walking practices. Founded in 2016, it connects the territory, its visual manifestations and its inhabitants through activities such as artist residencies, workshops, photographic campaigns, walks, exhibitions, and more. OMNE shares these initiatives via its online platform. Our research group values this project for placing the landscape and territory at the core of its identity. However, OMNE does not have direct communication channels and thus does not engage the community in initiatives, which are managed by others (Sordi et al., 2021) (see points A, B, D, G, H).

The *Aqua Granda, una Memoria Collettiva Digitale* project, developed in 2020 by Ca' Foscari University and the Science Gallery of Venice, is part of the H2020 EU Odyceus project. The platform preserves the digital memory of the 1966 and 2019 floods using social media, data analysis, and AI. It gathers reactions from citizens, visitors, and experts by aggregating resources from Twitter, WhatsApp, news articles, and social media data, archiving and processing them to create a collective record of these events. The Aqua Granda platform is a great case study for sharing grassroots memory, but it hasn't been used by institutions to reflect the full complexity of the events (Steels & Sartoris, 2021) (see points A, B, C, G, H).

Finally, *Europeana*, an archive aggregator, offers a practical example of transforming materials into catalysts for new narratives. Since 2021, it has hosted the Digital Storytelling Festival, where professionals from cultural institutions, educators, creatives, and students from Europe and beyond, use storytelling to explore culture through *Europeana*'s preserved materials. This event brings the archive to life, fostering a sense of community among scholars as they share stories around common themes. While the Accessible

Digital Archive project is seen as exemplary by our team, it unfortunately does not support the creation of local communities (<https://www.europeana.eu/it>) (see points A, E, F, G, H).

Quero Vas Civica Collezione Digitale Project

The analysis of the place, combined with the process of sharing and examining the case studies, made it possible to determine the overall vision of the project to be implemented in the area: the Civic Digital Collection Project of Quero Vas.

The process to develop the Civica involves the community as a central player. The project identifies tools such as the activation of official collaborative channels for collecting documents, the creation of an open expandable archive in which artefacts are organized and preserved, as well as the development of media and tools for sharing the transgenerational narrative of the territory. In gathering images of the life, events, cultural and natural heritage of the village, the project facilitates the citizens' awareness of actual assets in a mirroring process. The multimedia transcription and sharing process includes the acquisition of analog materials, the creation of a digital platform, and the dissemination of the digitized material. It furthermore builds bridges between a cultural offer that is currently disjointed. In fact, the area hosts numerous cultural institutions — two “public” libraries, two cultural centers, a future FAI Centre “the National Trust for Italy,” for welcoming visitors — and it is the object of spontaneous on-line narratives: some dedicated to transmitting the memory that shaped the region in the last century, others involved in contemporary local cultural programming. Finally, the community heritages can be nurtured through the cultural activities promoted by existing public and private organizations in the area: a subsequent part of the process is the enduring enhancement of the collections in a series of exhibitions, public screenings and events, and the production of editorial artefacts.

The Civic Digital Collection Project of Quero Vas is thus based on three conceptual pillars:

- Memory. The memory enhanced by the Collection includes traces of past historical events as well as recent anecdotes from local history, such as the development of companies in the area, diverse enterprises of its citizens, cultural events, plus the narratives of the territory proposed by communities online and on social media channels.
- Sharing. The project collects video testimonies and digitized documents in a platform that can be expanded over time. The process leads to the aggregation of documents that are currently scattered, stored in private collections, inaccessible sources, or non-institutional online channels.
- Participation. The success of the project is directly linked to the understanding of the Collection's mission and to the participation of citizens, governance and cultural institutions in sharing the values related to transmission and transgenerational heritage.

Assets, Roadmap and Project Dynamics

Conducting additional interviews in the territory, the team completed the account of a wider range of stakeholders that can be involved in different sections of the project. Table Fig. 4 provides an overview of the main actors, outlining their roles and practices, with the aim of clarifying and promoting the strategy and feasibility of the project to the governance.

The stakeholders include partners who the research team believe will be able to contribute to the project in various ways: by searching for and collecting sources to be enhanced, by creating and producing content, or by programming the promotion of the events. Each stakeholder is presented in consideration of the following assets: the actual vision and objectives for reinforcing the territory that they communicated to the research team, the contributions and roles they can assume and the actions they can take to achieve the aims of the research strategy.

Subject	Vision	Objective	Contribution	Actions
Municipality of Quero Vas	Creating an inclusive and mature citizenry that feels an active relationship with the administration	Activating a new narrative of the territory.	Construction of an inclusive network of new memories.	Planning of call to action to gather documents
		To become recognisable in the territory.	Preserving historical memory.	Didactical activities at schools on local memory
		To become attractive to actual and prospective inhabitants.		Predisposition of the material within temporary/permanent exhibitions.
Pro Loco Quero Vas and cultural Institutions	Rediscovering the local highlights and identity.	Making stronger the bond between citizens and association.	Building a program of events related to the extended memory.	Planning calls to action to gather documents.
	Introducing visitors to the local social community.	Enhancing the social community and the local history.	Building opportunities for public sharing of materials from the Collection.	Predisposition of the gained material within temporary/permanent exhibitions.
	Triggering tourism and land use.			
Facebook Group "Sei di Quero se".	Call themselves protagonists of the territory's narrative.	Gain wider social recognition.	Reaching a wider audience about the heritage and events.	Planning of call to action to gather documents
	Sharing memories.	Promote the on/off-line interaction among members.	Contribute to an archive that can be accessible in the future.	Contribution to the municipality's platform.
		Promoting the memory of the territory.		Contribute to events' promotion.
Photographers	Exploring the territory's less known highlights	Collecting new material	Participate in local activities	Participation in local events.
		Spreading one's practice into a collective collection		Educational activities to non professionals Sharing archives to the Civic Collection.
Emigrants	Share the past memory and maintain a connection to the country of origin.	Stay in touch with one's roots.	Rediscovering the territory.	Exploration of material in the civic collection remotely.
		Stay informed about present local activities.		
Tourists/ guests	Exploring the territory and sensing its history.	Spend an enjoyable time discovering a living and meaningful territory	Contact with the memory of the area	Participation in events and demonstrations.
	Tasting local products			Discovery of the heritage, memory and everyday life
	Participate in local festivals			
DMOs	Promoting tourism throughout the territory.	Conveying the richness and variety of the area.	Promote events dedicated to the discovery of the territory	Inclusion of events in dedicated portals
	Enhance events and accessibility to tourist information.			Contribute to events' promotion.

Fig. 4 Stakeholders' contributions to the research strategy, 2024, by Bonini Lessing, Bosco, Ciaramitaro, Toneguzzi.

The strategic plan Fig. 4 verified with the Municipality has undergone further development. On the one hand, the research team and the Municipality organized a public event to present the project to the citizens, aiming to involve them in the Civic Digital Collection from the early stages of document gathering. On the other hand, with the aim of facilitating the concrete development of the community project, the research group broke it down into phases, defining objectives, tools and media, and outlining its management.

The first public engagement event took place on April 11, 2024, at the Bice Lazzari Cultural Center, one of the cultural institutions in Quero Vas. Together with the event, the first call to action to collect family photos and documents was launched. That same evening, following the project presentation, citizens began the process of sharing their personal memories, marking the first step in building collective memory within the Civic Collection.

The first phase of content collection involved the activation of sharing repositories among citizens. The documents, sorted by theme and in chronological order, will later be uploaded onto a web platform organized by tags and timelines. The digital infrastructure housing these documents — with tags linked to those who shared them — will feature a clear, user-friendly interface, with tools for feedback and interaction, allowing users to create and manage contents as well as their own galleries. Finally, the archive will host virtual events to encourage active participation, campaigns to collect, share, and reactivate materials, using them as catalysts to organize exhibitions, educational activities, and more.

The research team has defined the development phases of the Civic Digital Collection in progressive steps. For each milestone, it identified the promoters, the content to be archived, the digital media to be used, the beneficiaries of the process, and the situated outcomes. The roadmap — from 2024 to 2034 — is outlined in the following table Fig. 5.

	who	milestones	contents	digital media	situated outcomes	recipient
2024	ProLoco Group "Sei di Quero se", "Sei di Alano se" Facebook group	Collection process design. Digital collection website Beta. Public display of memories and private photos to celebrate collective memory	Widespread collection process of even non-professional photographs, preliminary cataloguing	sharing a repository among citizens	Exhibition opening to celebrate territorial identity within existing local festival timeframe	Residents, visitors
2028	ProLoco group, Facebook and Instagram groups, local institutions	Fourth public exhibition	Collection of historical photographs deriving from established funds + New photographic acquisitions	Web platform organized by tags and timeline. Creation of galleries by users	Exhibition opening and activities at the beginning of the summer season	Residents, visitors, scholars, artists, photographers
2034	ProLoco group, Facebook and Instagram groups, national/international institutions	Celebrating the first 10 years of the civic archives	Collection of historical photographs deriving from established funds + New photographic acquisitions	Web platform daily used for training projects of local schools, virtual events, virtual exhibitions	Festival of different thematic exhibitions throughout the year	Residents, visitors, scholars, artists, photographers

Fig. 5
Roadmap for Civic Digital Collection, 2024–2034, 2024, by Bonini Lessing, Bosco, Ciaramitaro, Toneguzzi.

Conclusions

The paper focuses on the main outcomes of the annual research project *Quero-Vas: Active Itineraries among Traces of Memories*.

The first part of the research was dedicated to a deep geographical and social analysis of the territory and its community. It revealed that Quero Vas is known for historical events that identify it as an area of combat and WWI memorials: its highly articulated environmental and cultural vocation, on the contrary, is little exploited. The local government, deriving from the union of two distinct villages about ten years ago, did not support any organic processes of development that put the communities at the centre.

Working alongside the processes of land enhancement already underway, the research team proposed a methodology of inquiry that precedes specific actions of design for the territory. This methodological choice resulted in a continuous process of alternating observations and hypotheses of intervention that fell into the areas of *Social Innovation and Service Design*, *Design for Territorial and Local Development*, and *Design for Cultural Heritage* (Parente & Sedini, 2017).

Following the analysis of a selection of case studies that made it easier for the university research group and the municipal team to understand each other, the contribution of the research focused on the social enhancement of the local community, with the establishment of the Civic Digital Collection of Quero Vas.

The expected result is a digital platform derived from a process of collecting documents that involves the citizens, governance and cultural institutions, and brings citizens closer to governance. Developed over a time span of ten years, it includes a wide range of contributors and makes it possible to generate new contents that take the form of online and offline activities and events. The Civic Digital Collection becomes an aggregator of transgenerational memories, an active archive from which to select resources for exhibitions and events that bring people together. But first and foremost it is a tool to set in motion a continuous renewal of the shared imaginary of the area. The 'civic collection' quality of the project emphasizes the possibility that there is a device that can mediate access, participation and the sharing of *onlife* memory (Floridi, 2015) bridging the digital edges of the territory.

While it may take some years to verify the achievement of the envisioned goals, the research team believes the process described here can already provide a significant contribution at many levels. For the territory under examination, it contributed to empowering the local government and stakeholders to face the challenges brought by the new administrative district of Setteville, which grew out of the merger between Quero Vas and Alano di Piave, with a roadmap that can be implemented over time. It contributes to the scientific society of design by showing that the premises of *Design for Territorial and Local Development* can include adaptive design strategy and methodology for the enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage, which can reinforce the sense of belonging to the local community.

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Stretch the Edge – Design Driven Processes for Reactivating Small Walled Towns and Inland Areas was an international symposium held on June 22–23, 2023, at the University of the Republic of San Marino. Promoted in collaboration with the University of Bologna and Beijing City University, the event explored the potential of design as a booster for the reactivation of small, often isolated inland areas and walled towns that, despite challenges, possess strong territorial identities and unique characteristics.

Sixteen international case studies on design-led territorial regeneration were presented across three thematic sessions. ‘Activate the Edge’ explored design as a driver of place-making and place-keeping. ‘Join the Edge’ focused on community engagement and connecting places through design. ‘Enhance the Edge’ highlighted the role of design in valuing cultural heritage and local identity. Each session demonstrated how design can foster sustainable and inclusive reactivation.

The symposium opened with the presentation of a database mapping 150 national and international case studies, submitted by a global network of researchers and practitioners.

Parallel to the symposium, three working groups—‘Reactivation Strategies’, ‘Community Engagement’ and ‘Networked Territories’—convened through both online and onsite meetings. These groups promoted knowledge sharing and stakeholder involvement, focusing on design tools and co-design methods for community-based reactivation.

The proceedings compile contributions from speakers, participants, and working group members in two formats: ‘Research Papers’ highlighting the academic perspective and ‘Stories’ presenting interesting case studies shared during the event.

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