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Learning from the Route: a Pilot Project on Landscape Reading along the Itinerary of Via Lauretana Senese

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ABSTRACT

The essay investigates the opportunities generated by recovering a European Pilgrimage Route's pathway as device for landscape perception and territorial analysis. It is focused on a project conducted by Verdiana Network in collaboration with the Municipality of Asciano (Siena). The project aims to activate processes of landscape planning and management, and promote local tourism within the context of Asciano's rural landscape and among the cultural and natural heritage intercepted by this pilgrimage route. It concerns the Siena branch of the Via Lauretana, the pilgrimage route toward the Sanctuary of Loreto in the Marche Region. The project focuses on the *landscape structure* of the route, modelled by the territorial dimension and spatial configuration of the itinerary, together with the social processes of landscape perception activated by the route itself. From this point of view, the project consisted of a *process* of discovering the landscape along the route and intercepting polar elements that make the itinerary the basis for the development of local tourism and cultural activities.

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1. State of the art and perspective in the design and enhancement of Cultural Routes: what has been done? What is still missing?

The Cultural Routes have for a long time been the subject of many dissertations conducted from   academic/scientific and social/political points of view. They represent an interesting topic for experiencing a "landscape approach" to regional planning, and they are interesting mainly for their ability to activate processes of local development based on the enhancement of local peculiarity and vocations. It is furthermore a fertile ground for building a dialogue among various stakeholders: administrators, people involved in marketing and productive sectors, inhabitants, tourists, pilgrims, and occasional visitors.

Several scientific works on Cultural Routes focus more or less directly (in their perceptive relationship with the land they belong to) with historical, geographical or phenomenological perspective (Candy, 2004; Otero, 2010, Griselin and Salvador) as well as specific driving forces of spatial configuration of the land itself (Lombardeiro Folgueira, 2011). In some cases, the investigation revolves around cultural and social matters (Torres Feijó, 2011) specifically in regards to the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. The Via Francigena has also been the subject of scientific investigation in terms of landscape and territory concerning Italian lands (Bettini et al., 2011). A relevant work on the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe stresses the topic of their connection with policies and practice at a European level (Berti, 2012). Operative approaches in terms of landscape project and innovative methods for managing complexity in the field of cultural heritage conservation have also been figured out in the last few years (Serenelli, 2013 and Idone, 2013) with important references on the specific geographical context of the Via Lauretana. The landscape and its multi-faceted properties and values are always central in this kind of research. However, an organic scientific vision is still missing, as is a specific approach on the possible implication of Cultural Routes on landscape architecture involving the role of landscape architect. This is particularly important in this specific moment in which historic and religious itineraries are taken in Italy as unmissable opportunities for promoting tourism and cultural projects at a local, regional and national level. If we talk about a national "business" of cultural routes, as some newspapers recently spoke about for 2016 in Italy (Repubblica.t, September, 12th), we must also work hard and systematically. First, in the scientific research field, in order to create a complete and holistic vision of the issue, also by comparing different approaches. Second, at the local communities level, to disseminate awareness, but also to collect information and knowledge in a bottom-up attitude. In this frame it is important to create links between researchers and public and private sectors, to define methodologies and operative programs. It will also be quite useful to create bridges between disciplines, in so far as Cultural Routes are very complex objects involving many fields of knowledge: history, geography, cartography, natural sciences and spatial analysis, but also anthropology, sociology, ethnography, sport and human behaviour. The concept of *landscape*, explored and disseminated by the Council of Europe, can be the *trait d'union* of the manifold aspects, but it is strictly necessary to find out a clear approach. In this essay, our proposal involves theoretical

aspects, scientific approaches and on-field participatory practices. Our work concerns the Via Lauretana historical pilgrimage route as a case study, and it is oriented to the field of landscape studies.

2. Background and research approach: the central role of the landscape in the complex heritage of Cultural Routes

Our research fits in the topic of Cultural Route (*CR*) as it is defined by the Council of Europe with the specific programme started in 1987 with the Santiago Declaration[1].

It specifically focuses on the Via Lauretana Senese, taking into consideration its first leg, between Siena and Asciano, in the Province of Siena.

The Via Lauretana Senese is not recognized as a *CR* by the Council of Europe even though it has many of the required features. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, we will be treating it as such for two reasons: first, because considering all new paths that are spreading across Europe (and mainly in Italy, in this 2016 *Year of Walking*) with the same care as a labelled *CR* certainly will be useful for implementing design purposes in this field. Second, because the method of landscape analysis and improvement of paths developed and validated by the Via Lauretana case study is replicable and declinable in various situations. It could be conveniently applied, *a fortiori,* to the planning and landscape improvement of *CR* already recognized by the European Institute. Moreover, this method aims to answer some of the needs expressed in the Charters and Conventions governing the field of *CR* which have long remained unfulfilled in the practice of enhancement projects.

Considering the Via Lauretana as a real *CR* is to interpret it as a design opportunity of territorial management and local development. Therefore, the method of analysis and enhancement of scenic paths drawn with the Via Lauretana case study, is a replicable and declinable methodology in various territorial situations, and may conveniently be applied to the landscaping enhancement of paths already recognized as *CR*.

All the key documents governing the field of *CR* stress the importance of enhancing the *landscape* as the central asset of the complex system of cultural and natural heritage constituting the historical and geographical contexts of a *CR*.

For example, the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes[2] emphasizes the central role of the territory as the landscape projection: "the territorial setting, whether natural or cultural (urban or rural), provides the framework of the Cultural Route, gives it its particular atmosphere, characterized by elements and values of both physical and intangible nature, and is fundamental for the comprehension, conservation and enjoyment of the route".

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention identifies the route with "a specific, dynamic type of cultural landscape" with significant attitude of hierarchical position in which it enjoys the scenery as compared to any other property correlated by Routes".

Finally, the Resolutions of the European Council on *CR* points out that, among the most important parameters of attributing a *CR* label, the design approach has to be considered essential in order to respond to the principles and objective of the

European Landscape Convention (CoE, 2000). Thus the route can be seen as an experimental laboratory en-plain-air in the field of landscape studies (Thomas-Pennette & Berti, 2009).

2.1 Some Theoretical premises

The historical evolution of the landscape concept contains all the references for regarding the path as a founding element of its fruition, its perception and awareness of it. Travelling (mainly on foot) and perceiving the landscape, are inseparable activities of the landscape experience along the route. The landscape presents itself according to paths that are "typical", i.e. those that have a typical way of narrating places and of driving the passenger into them (Socco, 2002). This attitude is greater and more meaningful in the specific typology of "linear routes" (Berti, 2014) similar to ancient *viae peregrinales*, to which the Via Lauretana is attributed and that can be classified as the highest level of "typical path" (*sensu* Socco). The Via Francigena as a *road-territory* (Stopani, 1988) is a clear example in this sense. This typicality of the road itself comes from the imprinting left by the historical movements of multitude of people who, at different times, walked on the ancient Roman roads (e.g. Cassia, Appia) and on the oldest Etruscan paths. Those continuous movements of people, but also goods and ideas, gave the original territorial imprinting to the places visited, determining their economic, urban and landscape structures on a large spatial and time scale. A classic example of this territorial configuration is Siena, "daughter of the road" (Sestan, 1961) that due to the conurbation of two rural villages along the way, began its glorious urban affair. We could say the same about the town of Loreto, born along another road, shorter and smaller than Francigena, but quite meaningful for understanding local territorial evolution. Therefore, a pilgrimage experience on the Via Francigena, or on the Via Lauretana, as on other historic pilgrimage routes spread all over Italian lands, means reading the landscape *from the inside*, following a sort of *autobiographical narrative*. This means indeed *walking along* the historical and geographical coordinates of the genesis of a land.

Walking thus becomes a vehicle of landscape perception, in so far as it is a specific dynamic people-environment interaction, that can be expressed in many different ways (Ingold and Lee Vergunst, 2008; Solnit, 2000).

Furthermore, the perceptual immersive mode, the possibility of interaction, the rhythm of the walking itself, the need to orientate our mind and body into an unknown landall exacerbate observation skills, despite various contemporary digital devices of navigation such as Google maps or other digital applications. This makes the journey a selected mode for enjoying and understanding the landscape as a whole. Such understanding and enjoyment were also cited among the top reasons that, during a campaign of interviews given to a hundred pilgrims intercepted along the Via Francigena, led them to make the pilgrimage (Savelli, 2014). From these considerations we can deduce the existence of a conspicuous and conscious "landscape" recognized as the main focus of the walking experience, on the part of the competent institutions in the *CR* field as well as on the part of users and recipients of the *CR* project. This entails

the need to involve some fundamental disciplines on the projects regarding *CR*, such as Landscape Architecture. Yet often the landscape remains latent in the analysis and design interventions and enhancement of *CR* and other routes that rarely see the Landscape Architect involved.

2.2 Current practices and proposals for a landscape enhancement of CRs

CR is a complex object concerning many levels of analysis and management that entail multiple layers in design activities. Among the parameters considered in designing the physical layout of the paths and the resting points, the level of landscape, normally comes after that of *traveller*s' safety on the road, but also paradoxically, after many other prioritised aspects such as the search for the shortest route. Sometimes too much attention is given to a philological research exercise of the historical path aimed at achieving adherence for the contemporary plot to an "original" status which is often fictitious, or at least arbitrary and depending on a great variety of historical situations such as specific pilgrims' needs, seasonal conditions, morphological structure of the roads etc.

Moreover in current practice the intervention enhancements of existing paths are often exhausted when implementing safety measures in placement of functional furniture (benches, fountains, shady rows) while interventions dedicated to the enjoyment, aesthetics and the understanding of the landscape are linked, except on rare occasions, with the preparation of staging points like picnic areas or lookouts.

Instead, according to the approach that we propose, the landscape has to assume a prominent place among the variables determining the design of a *CR*, starting from the spatial definition of the paths. That means maximizing the different types of land uses and intercepted "landscape units", maximizing stretches of traditional agricultural landscape crossings (offering opportunities to taste the traditional products and dialectics of the farmers/actors), the diversification of perception types (closed visuals, valleys, open ridges) and their connection through the most comprehensive kinesthetic direction. Therefore, the approach proposed here is focused on the enhancement of the narrative attitude of the path in terms of the landscape and other pointed property constituting the route, expressed in two types or levels of intervention: the short stops system and the rest areas system.

    1. Short stops system. A system of simple resting places used to create an infrastructure of landscape observation points, in order to guide pilgrims in the decoding of landscape signs. It can be figured out in a series of semiotic translation devices that are useful for communicating local knowledge to the travellers they would like to learn more about. They are useful to direct the gaze to some elements of the landscape visible to the inhabitants. Otherwise these important and identifying characteristics would remain dormant in perception, or misunderstood. Such devices focus on experiential, interactive, playful approaches consisting in minimum equipment. They are site specific and therefore not referable to any schedule. These might be textual and graphical inserts on the ground, telescopes, frames, landscape lecterns, information

totems, strategically placed seating, small inhabitable art installations etc. but also a series of geo-referenced and accessible content through an app or specific software.

2. Rest areas system. Thisis a system of staging places creating infrastructure for lodging and eating in highly significant contexts guiding an understanding of the path and its landscape. Identifying such elements means to intercept and understand all good practices relating to traditional agriculture that oversee the high cultural value, ecological and identifiable agricultural landscapes and to equip them as tasting points, as overnight accommodation and interaction with farmers/actors of the landscape.

3. In this context, the reading landscape devices assume an important role as short stops in the landscape.

Walking in the countryside, more so than in the forest or in grassland, (contrary to common belief) there are very few places where one may sit comfortably. Therefore, to make the walk more enjoyable some rest areas must be provided on the road. To identify the points at which to place these areas, parameters were used such as elevation profile (for its strategic location at the end of tiring stretches) the shading, ventilation, and the vocation of the place to the aesthetic contemplation and understanding of the landscape.

The short stops system is useful to lead the pilgrimsin decoding the signs and in their understanding. It may be established in a series of semiotic translation devices, useful to communicate to *viatores* the local knowledge they want to learn and to direct the gazes to some structuring elements of the local landscape that would otherwise remain latent. These devices aim at methods of experiential approach, interactive and playful, consisting of minimum site-specific devices and therefore not attributable to any abacus. This can be text and graphics on the pavement surface, telescopes, frames, landscape lectern, information kiosks, stems, strategically placed benches, small habitable art installations, etc.

The most important devices of this widespread infrastructure that acts as a tutor for landscape navigation and understanding are the *reading points* of the landscape surrounding the pathway.

These are essentially observation sites (usually viewpoints) which are visible when watching a specific landscape scene, highly "imageable" (Arnheim, 1987) and learnable in a certain way, with a specific scale. It consists of a broad frame including vast landscape scenes. The most important design choice is in their location, determined by the scene content. The points can be chosen to frame the most important elements intercepted and, also, to understand these subjects in their spatial and functional relationships. The reading of the content can be assisted in various ways, a simple text, various type of allegories or clues. The support of this reading may take various shapes, sizes and materials. Following the example of the illustrious precedent of *site transitoire* (Jean Paul Philippe, 1993) in the lands of Siena, a land art artwork, artistic ludic and interactive modes should be preferred. These can be permanent structures as ephemeral installations to create and recreate at every season (for example with annual environmental art competitions) in harmony with the landscape.

Inside both the smallest devices and reading points, the *viator* can find the explanation, description, or at the least a clue useful for reading and understanding the landscape in

particular information layers. Some are not immediately intelligible, because they belong to the traditional knowledge or to highly specialized expert knowledge.

2.3 The interpretative key of iconemi

In the complexity of the landscape signs how are the focal points of the narrative identified? What are the specific identifying elements of the landscape that have to be revealed to the travellers in order to "translate" the multiple local landscapes' meanings to them? Which method may be used to investigate a complex reality from the summary of subjectivity? What is the *collective* representation of the landscape? A key point for this purpose is the concept of *iconemi* as salient elements of the landscape. They are the elementary *units of perception*, synecdoche, the parts that express the whole with a primary hierarchical function. They are the emerging images, semantic landscape nodes that best embody the area's *genius loci*, the visual semantic reference to the cultural relationship that a society establishes with its territory (Turri, 1998, 2004).

The *iconemi* can be, first of all, the insider features of the landscape. They can be identified by asking residents which factors, in their view, qualify their landscape in a distinctive and characteristic manner. Translating these *iconemi*, hidden from the out-group of outsider pilgrims, reveals a deep and intimate knowledge of the landscape that is otherwise so difficult to understand.

To increase the intrinsic inclination that the paths have, not only as linear reading observers but also as paths of literacy to the landscape (landscape literacy) the same investigation can be performed in a group of various landscape experts, in order to provide the travellers with specialist knowledge in an analytical and transdisciplinary project approach.

Mixing inhabitants' and experts' analysis reveals a landscape *cognitive map* along the route, useful for a *CR* design process.

Finally, for the development of existing paths, one cannot disregard a survey of "outsider *iconemi*" recognised by travellers, whose perceptual map represents actual landscape readability. This final map should be compared with the design level emerging when overlapping insiders and experts perceptual maps, thus giving an idea of the gap that the design of a *CR* has to fill.

The mapping mode of insiders' and experts' *iconemi* are explained in more detail in the paragraphs related to the Via Lauretana case study, regarding the "walkshop" approach. Semi-structured interviews administered at the end of single stages of the route have produced good results for outsider *iconemi* mapping (with a loss of resolution in progressive perceptive grain and increase of hierarchical importance).

Therefore, for investigation methods relating to the perception of all three targets that never disregard a peripatetic phase along the studied route, it can be seen that the interview is always inspired by the following "operative" definition of the concept of *iconema*: "ask ten people who have made the same trip what are the images that most characterise that territory, region, country. Eight out of ten will tell you the same thing. They are the *iconemi* "(Turri, 1998, 2004).

3. The methodological approach and the application stages developed in the case study from Siena to Asciano

This paragraph illustrates the method developed for the Via Lauretana case study in all its implementation phases: the identification of the specific criteria in the analysis phase, the analytical studies of the *CR* from different point of view, the methodology used and its specificity in each phase.

The Via Lauretana Senese is an approximately 7 stages' pilgrimage itinerary connecting Siena with the Val di Chiana Valley, Trasimeno Lake and Umbria Valley to Perugia and Assisi, intercepting therefore the Umbria-Marche's Via Lauretana from Assisi to Loreto through the Apennine Range of Central Italy. Our case study is located along the Via Lauretana Senese and constitutes its very first stage, from Siena to Asciano. It is developed in the Province of Siena and mainly in the lands of "Crete Senesi" a beautiful landscape characterising the surroundings of the city of Siena.

3.1 Selection of the specific criteria to identify the main pathway.

The main criteria used for the identification of the Via Lauretana Senese as a religious-spiritual pathway and landscape reading device supporting the experience of cultural tourism can be summarised in the following seven criteria.

a. **Maximising safety and comfort of walking.**

When tracing the path, security has been considered amongst the highest-weighted criteria. We therefore tried to reduce the stretches of asphalt by diverting the path on the many dirt roads which dot the Siena district. These are already extraordinary eco-tourism resources. Where asphalt is unavoidable, special measures are taken to make the path safe. The highway works as a fundamental connection for the inhabitants. It is narrow, has high traffic congestion, is tortuous and full of low visibility curves.

As with everything, the reduction of drivable sections, with promiscuity between vehicles and pedestrians is essential to ensure an adequate level of safety for pilgrims and drivers. The decision to divert to rural dirt roads on secondary roads is also determined by other factors relating to the comfort of walking and its enjoyment. The dirt roads are able to recount the territory from an intimate, insider point of view which is inner, inland and often unknown even to inhabitants themselves.

To ensure the almost complete course of the path in conditions of safety and comfort, in our case study it was necessary to make very long digressions which are not at all philological. This is the case of the Monte Sante Marie detour climb that allows walkers to avoid a quite dangerous section of vehicle road (the Provincial Road Lauretana) between Arbia and Asciano.

Although it will not be possible to prevent individual pilgrims and travellers from shortening the stage anyway on asphalt, it is absolutely proper to guarantee some safer and valuable alternatives from the point of view of the directing landscape.

b. **Intercepting the potential *submansio* along the way.**

The second parameter that is taken into account when recognising the path, is the interception of potential *spedalia or submansio.* These are points where it is possible to make an intermediate stop with hospitality dedicated to pilgrims, as in the past. While it is true that the pilgrims are big walkers, it is also true that stages higher than 30 km become (even when not prohibitive or punitive) much less enjoyable at least and the walk becomes a trek or, worse, a march. People look down more than at the landscape. They avoid the intermediate stops which represent the added value of walking. The level to aim for is the Santiago standard: an agreed hostel every 10-12 Km. This model is particularly compatible with the Via Lauretana Senese for its reduced overall length which is well suited to a slower and more rhythmic pace.

The imprinting that we have given to the first stage is a journey which leaves time to enjoy the beauty, the products and the people met. A circadian rhythm suited to an actual experiential, spiritual, cultural, hedonistic tourism and truly slow. All this is also made in view of the economic development of the area by increasing visits to a territory, province, and region.

The pathway studied by our working group, connecting Siena with Asciano is about 38 km long, across the Crete Senesi and Monte Sante Marie. From surveys and analysis two potential *submansiones* for the location of two new *spedalia* are identified: the small villages of Mucigliani and Vescona.

Mucigliani was chosen as *submansio* because it's the first hamlet to be intercepted by the route after Arbia and Taverne d'Arbia and after the long "biancane" crossing (characteristic clay rich soil landforms). Vescona was chosen as a possible intermediate step for several reasons. First, because a literature search revealed that Vescona was an historical *submansio lauretana.* Secondly, the village was chosen for the presence of a family-run rural lab for preparation of Cinta Senese sausages (the typical breed of native pork as portrayed in the same "Allegoria del Buongoverno" that Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted in the early XIV century and can still be seen in Siena). This small handicraft lab closes *in situ* the food supply chain subtended to the large part of the agricultural landscape just crossed on foot. So Vescona offers to pilgrims the chance to taste the landscape and its products of excellence, and also the chance to speak with the farmers who are the real landscape designers and custodians. Both villages are located in dominant positions that offer scenic views on the landscape; also, both villages already have farmhouses and other accommodation facilities. Finally, at Vescona the Olivetan monks were willing to turn the spaces of the old San Fiorenzo parish church into a new hostel for pilgrims. Similar participatory processes with potential stakeholders were started in both locations.

c.   **Intercepting the agricultural best practices as sites for hospitality and top refreshments.**

When drawing the path, we took into account requirements related to the physiological need for rest, water and food, trying to configure this stop as an opportunity for real knowledge of the landscape and cultural exchange with its inhabitants. In particular, the choice of points to intercept is focused on landscapes and traditional agricultural products (Barbera, Blasi & Marino, 2014). They are custodians of vernacular knowledge, agricultural biodiversity, which are the expression of the *genii locorum* and of the intangible heritage, linked to the tradition and *folklore*, of which traditional agriculture is the guardian.

This implements the ability to read the landscape. The *traveller*, stopping at the farmers market will not only have the opportunity to taste the products of agricultural landscapes but also have the opportunity to talk with the farmer actors, who are creators and custodians of the walked landscapes. The Vescona village with its rural charcuterie (as discussed above) is a paradigmatic example of this approach.

d.   **Implementing the path attitude as landscape reading tool.**

Drawing the path, we sought to determine the track according to the quality and variety of the "landscape text". This was to ensure that the narration was as complete and exhaustive as possible in terms of different realities in which the territory has declined; the morphology, geology, land use, plant mantles as well as the functional relationships existing between these realities. In fact, the path switch from the arboriculture of the Siena countryside to intensive cereal production of Crete Senesi, from the Buongoverno landscapes to the Biancane, last fragment of the Accona desert where St. John the Baptist retired, as painted by Giovanni di Paolo. From pioneer vegetation of gullies to thermophilic forests of oaks, from uncultivated abandoned lands to the industrial agrarian consortium of Arbia area. The archeology of abandoned brick industry to the last vestiges of traditional agricultural landscapes, like the vineyard of *vite maritata* that welcomes pilgrims at the gates of Asciano or the small plot of mixed vineyard-olive groves *a cavalcapoggio* leaning on a hill in front of Vescona.

This study was conducted with a holistic and synthetic approach based on the peripatetic survey. Walking the routes becomes a veritable analysis tool and the route itself becomes the reading device of landscape text.

The path begins with the immersive vision of the tree-lined landscapes of the countryside around Siena where the perceptual texture is defined and varied. While leaving the city of Siena the road tells the landscape of *appoderamento fitto mezzadrile*, landscape where vineyards, villas, castles and olive groves are mixed; where attention is attracted by a nebula of neighbouring singularities such as mulberry, loquats, barns, parish churches, coats of arms, votive crosses and tabernacles. Whereas for example after Leonina, the path offers an open and wide vision which is almost aerial, characterising the streets along the ridge which are typical of the Crete Senesi and where the foreground cereal crops are low and continuous, leading the eye to wander.

e.   **Intercepting items with historical, architectural, spiritual interest.**

We were careful when designing the track, under symmetric mileage conditions, to intercept the most points and sites of historical, artistic, naturalistic interest as well as: churches, tabernacles, evidences of rural architecture, protected areas, etc. All this is done in order to increase and diversify the cultural contents that travellers can browse on the journey.

f.   **Intercepting points and stretches belonging to the philological track or to other historical roads.**

For practical purposes, due to security priorities and having to check a maximum path suggested by the municipality, an in-depth study on the ancient historical track of Via Lauretana was not conducted. The study was limited to the consultation of several fundamental sources such as *il Dizionario Geografico, Fisico e Storico della Toscana*[3] the

Catasti Storici Regionali[4]; as well as the general research work conducted by some local historians[5].

Where it was not possible or convenient to trace the path of ancient Via Lauretana path, we diverted on roads of historical interest susceptible to work as abscissa reference for a diachronic landscape reading.

g. **Minimise crossings of private property.**

Finally, the last parameter considered in the choice of the road layout is the private ownership of land. We have attempted to minimise the lines crossing over private farms. Where this is not possible we proceed by establishing a participatory board for consultation and negotiation, useful for defining the terms and methods of interaction between the street, the Municipality and private citizens.

3.2 Pathway design methodology: the field survey and the walkshops.

The second aspect related to the case study is the operational methodology that is here illustrated for the path analysis phase and the design phase. In general, the methodology that has been followed is based on continuous feedback between *in situ* surveys, bibliographical research on literature review, cartographic processing, quantitative and qualitative analyses of GIS software support.

a) The surveys. The first step was an exchange with local administration bodies (which provided a first path hypothesis), that has been continued during all the research. The second step consists of bibliographic and cartographic research which is useful for tracing, by using photo-interpretation on Google maps, several possible alternative tracks to edit and check directly *in situ* according to the peripatetic design approach which is one of the distinctive characters of the Verdiana Network philosophy.

The first reconnaissance survey (August 2014) was conducted to check the route suggested by the Municipality, to check the tracks drawn by photo-interpretation, to study and take a census, to map any potential alternatives detected *in situ* and to organize the preliminary work. This survey was expeditiously carried out on a bike by a single operator, over 3 days. From this survey a sheaf of possible tracks (to be analysed thoroughly and systematically via on foot surveys and GIS analysis) has been selected.

The second systematic survey (September 2014) was done in order to reduce the spectrum of options identifying the best alternatives with regard to the safety and landscape value of the road segment. The survey was carried out, simultaneously, by 5 skilled workers first by bicycle and then on foot. A first selection of pathway was identified, mapped and georeferenced. These should be subjected to further quantitative assessment based on GIS analysis. At the same time the GIS geo-referencing of road alternatives was made by GPS surveying. This has been indispensable support for further analysis on critical issues, as well as the basic archive for all analytical and design studies.

In particular, the survey was aimed at cataloguing the follow information: safety, presence of roadbed, accommodation for overnight stay, food and water supply points, points of interest (historic and spiritual), the landscape.

This last aspect, on landscape analysis was the more interesting also because it was the occasion to develop a specific methodology able to gather together information from experts, inhabitants, administrators, local actors.

b) The Walkshops. The walkshop represents the key moment and is distinctive of the Verdiana Network's research and design processes and it can be seen as an innovative tool for mapping landscape contents and theoretical assumptions. It is based on the direct investigation "on the move" on landscape perception of special categories of walkers (inhabitants and experts) and, in particular, on the peripatetic mapping of this perception. Indeed, the walkshop is an itinerant workshop, or walking-workshop which lies somewhere between survey, analysis and meta-project. The aim of the walkshop is to obtain landscape information to be transmitted to the pilgrim in various ways. Two walkshops has been organized during the onfield survey, one intercepting inhabitants' views of their own lands, the other one collecting more scientific data on landscape within a group of experts in various disciplines concerning landscape studies.

The pedestrian cultural routes should not be designed by default, at a drawing board, on the basis of aerial photos and some fragmentary survey, perhaps from a car.

Figure 1: The picture shows a moment of experts' walkshop into the land of "crete senesi".
Photo by Chiara Serenelli

The kinesthetic narration of the landscape, led by the route, has its own very specific direction. The storytelling has its own sequence and its own rhythm which is not deductible from fragmentary surveys, and even less so, by a geoscopic satellite vision. Likewise, a project whose subject is the landscape improvement of cultural routes cannot be separated from the survey of locals' landscape perception, insofar as

"landscape,, by definition, consists in "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (European Landscape Convenction, 2000) and, therefore, without the inhabitants, does not exist (Priore, 2009). Local populations hold the deep and co-evolutionary knowledge of their own domestic landscape. In the lands we studied, farmers design moulds and overcomes many difficulties, the arable hilly landscape universally known and appreciated in the world by the name "Crete Senesi". The inhabitants scatter their symbols throughout the landscape which are the projections and lynchpins of local identity. The interpretation of these symbolic landscapes is one of the most important cultural growth opportunities that the pedestrian journey can offer the pilgrim. Therefore, walking on cultural route and ignoring the dweller's image of landscape, means having an incomplete experience without achieving that intimate, interactive, emotional and experiential knowledge that the modern *viatores* seek.

The inhabitants' walkshop aimed to gather information and descriptions of the insiders' landscape. Particular importance was given to those landscapes that are the artefact, in perpetual reconstruction, of shepherds' and farmers' daily work. During the workshop some of the farm inhabitants were interviewed, when intercepted by the route to collect the descriptions of those who are really producing the landscape.

The walkshop was held as a collective interview on the landscape. Each participant received a document consisting of an introduction, a questionnaire and a survey form to record the evoked *iconemi* and any related descriptive notes. During the walk, researchers record and transcribe the inhabitants' reports. The inhabitants' "domestic" readings were collected in a series of analytical cards which report the description, the subject and the inhabitant. These cards have been revised and integrated by each respondent.

This work can be considered as 'in progress' as it would be very interesting to run a deeper investigation extended to other residents (and then to pilgrims) in order to establish an insider-outsider landscape peripatetic observatory along the route.

The experts' walkshop had on the other hand the aim of taking a census of the expert, objective and scientific reading of the various thematic layers that make up the landscape. There are as many worlds reading the landscape as there are eyes looking it (Mereleau-Ponty, 1964). Even if we all look at the same thing, we do not look in the same way (Raffaestin 2005). Specialist expert reading is based on this fundamental premise. The landscape is a holistic system (composed of a wide range of physical and informative layers- biotope, biocenosis, etc.) on which people interact and have interacted for centuries. The only possible way to get closer to understanding it is through a transdisciplinary understanding.

The transmission of this plural specialist and transversal vision will enrich the experience of the journey by turning the walk into a moment of deep knowledge. Whereas the inhabitants' walkshop was aimed at portraying the intimate, emotional and shared image (through which the local population represents itself) the experts' walkshop investigates the perceptions of an transdisciplinary group of University professors, and professionals specialized in the various "matters" of which the landscape is made up. The walkshop was held as a kind of peripatetic transdisciplinary lesson ranging from theology, anthropology, philosophy to synphytosociology, ecology to forestry, agricultural and economic sciences etc. The expert readings were collected

through a series of contributions, written by the participants. The documents lie somewhere between travel diary and scientific reports which, together with the collective and vernacular contents detected by inhabitants' perceptions, make an archive reference for developing masterplan.

The surveys and the two walkshops provided an exploration of the landscapes at 360 degrees. Even if not systematically, they identified choral, scenic and detailed aspects of the landscape along the Via Lauretana, aspects that not even a meticulous cartographic analysis is capable of revealing.

The only cartographic analysis was that of the land use systems (according to regional classification) used in overlay on satellite pictures as a starting tool. This integrates other fundamental analyses including the perceptive and peripatetic analysis.

We summarised the issues raised in a series of tabs classifying (as different landscape unit) the landscapes crossed on the way. We have not plotted the walkscape perimeter divided into different areas as, although interesting, it does not serve the immediate purpose of this work. The landscape units are described and identified by relative route segments. The descriptions of the single units are the result of a synthesis of field surveys and walkshop results as indicated below.

The corresponding sections of various landscapes areas have been identified and geo-referenced using Geographic Information Systems. Broadly between Siena and Asciano we can identify two macro-areas of landscape: 1 - The macro areas of suburban landscape of *contado senese* (Sereni, 1960) not too far from that represented so well by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the fresco of Buongoverno; 2 - The macro areas of *crete senesi* landscapes.

The transition threshold can be identified with the Arbia bridge and, more extensively, in the area between the Taverne d'Arbia and the Arbia village. These macro areas were divided into the following units: 1) The historic city centre of Siena. 2) The consolidated urban surroundings of Siena with a continuous residential urban pattern 3) The periurban range of Siena with a discontinuous urban patter not only with residential functions but also commercial and industrial. 4) The lands of "contado senese" (that is to say the rural patterns of the immediate surroundings of the city of Siena, as described in many artworks representing senese landscape, starting from the Ambrogio Lorenzetti's masterpieces). 5) The lands of "crete senesi" mainly characterized by croplands with some olive groves, vineyards and orchard groves, small areas of broad-leaved forests and few scattered settlements. This landscape unit is associated with that of woodlands of the crete senesi, a land in which wooded areas are dominant on croplands. 6) The periurban area of Arbia with surroundings traditional rural landscapes and traces of abandoned historical industrial buildings for the local brick manufacturing. 7) The spectacular lands of "biancane" of Leonina, a high valued landscape also described in some art masterpieces such as S. Giovanni Battista's paintings by Giovanni di Paolo, representing the famous "Accona desert". 8) The periurban area of Asciano. 9) The historical town of Asciano defined by the ancient perimeter of the urban walls.

The above landscape units have been classified and described in a table used for articulating the pathway between Siena and Asciano in 13 ranges with different characterization of landscape features. It is also useful for identifying elements of the final masterplan.

Figure 2: The picture shows a residual patch of traditional agricultural landscape into the grazing lands in the surroundings of Asciano.
Photo by Chiara Serenelli

4. The masterplan

Based on critical and design considerations resulting from the synthesis of the outcomes of the field survey, GIS analysis and walkshops, a masterplan was drawn up for the "New route of the ancient Via Lauretana between Siena and Asciano". This master plan, together with the drawings that identify the track, constitutes the design output of this work, in the same way the methodology is the theoretical output. The masterplan is composed of two types of interventions:

a) Interventions needed to equip the Via Lauretana as a route to be travelled on foot such as physical practicability in safety conditions, signals, set-up infrastructure to help ensure the comfort of walking (hospitals, food points, water points, benches etc.)

b) Interventions needed to implement the path attitude as narrative structure of the landscape, the latter embodies the real project for landscape improvement

4.1. Interventions for practicability

a) Road section to be secured by creating a path at the edge of the fields. In some places the criticality detected by analysis can be solved by creating paths that follow the road on the field edge. Their feasibility and type are to be agreed with the owner of the field. A drawing with an unsown tractor field strip would be sufficient, but considering the problems of feasibility, connected to the clay soil in case of rain, it would be preferable to create a path of porous paving or gravel. Sometimes the track is located at a higher level and the edge that separates the field from the road is vegetated by native species in spontaneous hedges that work as visual and audio filters. Therefore, it is suggested to reproduce this landscape device by creating new lanes with pilgrims' comfort benefits and for connectivity of ecological networks as frameworks of agroecosystem.

b) Road section to be secured with direct interventions on the path. In some route segments the safety measures can be applied through direct intervention on the roadway with bollards, speed bumps, signs, lower speed limit, electronic speed control and by creating dedicated and protected lanes. These adjustments are the responsibility of the appropriate technical departments therefore, we only reported the segments giving them a degree of intervention priorities.

c) Road section to be realized *ex novo* **in the fields**. They are road sections through crops where the path doesn't currently exist and, therefore, must be created. Also in this case, it is possible draw by tractor and leave a strip unsown according to the respective field owners, although it would be better to create a stabilized porous paving or gravel path.

d) Ford construction. Three fords on 2 streams were identified to be fitted out with simple stones or light walkways.

4.2 Road signalling interventions

a) **Signposts**. As a priority, all forks, intersections and crossroads that involve a direction choice must be equipped with signals. To make the pilgrims' walk easier, reassuring and "dreamy" it's appropriate to affix frequent indications in the straight route sections also. To reduce costs and landscape impact it is preferable to use stencils with an official logo or paint on already existing supports (asphalt, trunks, walls, poles) minimising the vertical signage and avoiding paradoxical traffic signs in rural contexts.

b) **Milestones**. We recommend affixing milestones (every 5 km) contributing to articulating and emphasizing progression toward the destination. The use of local travertine worked by local artisans as non-standard pieces of art is recommended.

4.3. Maintenance and construction of water points

Water was always a characteristic infrastructure of historical road systems, whether they are transhumance tracks, commercial roads or pilgrimage ways. Fountains and water troughs are indispensable for the road physiology. They are characteristically scattered along the paths, especially in the countryside, pastures and woodlands so as to serve as evidence for the historical reconstruction of the roads. All the fountains on the track, whether historical or not, are considered as forming part of the infrastructure of water associated with the Via Lauretana. Among the main interventions that we have planned is the restoration of the historical fountain of Mencia (located in the main street of the historic centre of Asciano) in which symbolic and artistic values are added to practical ones. We also planned the careful maintenance of the public fountain of Arbia that today is the last chance to supply free and always available water before Asciano. Finally, the setting up of three fountains near Mucigliani and Vescona and Monte Sante Marie is expected (the latter is very strategic because it is located between Vescona and Asciano in the middle of a stretch of 16 kilometres of climbs and descents) so the longest distance between two water points can be reduced to a more reasonable distance of 8 km.

5. Cultural routes as driving forces for territorial governance processes

The experience along the Via Lauretana Senese shows that the cultural routes hold the potential to bring innovation into territorial governance processes. Two of the main aspects that reflect this attitude are the capacity to enhance the participation of civil society(in the design phase as well as in the management phase), and the establishment of public-private partnership at the local level, since the aspects related to the landscape, cultural and natural assets of *CR*s are strictly linked to social and economic aspects.

From this pilot project it can be seen that the route is one of the main element that characterises the *CR*, though it is not the only one and not even the most significant. The physical line of the itinerary becomes the "red line" of the story of the territories crossed by the route and at the same time represents the way through which it is possible that the history and the aspiration impressed in the shape of the landscapes can be revealed.

The approach is focussed on the implementation of the attitude of the itinerary to become a device of *reading the landscape*. Designing a *CR* requires the ability to recover an ancient path and make it safe for walkers and tourists, but also planning decisions that relate to the interpretation of the path as a landscape narration.

The qualities of the landscapes are the priority element that guides this interpretation, and include the variety of the landscape, such as the morphology, geology, vegetation and the functional links among them within a complex system of interrelations.

Most of the interventions that the research has foreseen are related to the implementation of the attitude of the path as a narrative structure of the landscape.

These are the most important interventions as they substantiate the project of landscape improvement of route, understood as the implementation of its ability to narrate the landscape as a mirror of society and palimpsest of local history.

It is obvious that the understanding and the gaze of even the most attentive and curious pilgrim can miss many of the meanings that the landscape contains as a system of signs. Meanings that instead are clear and shared in the local culture and semiosis.

The unveiling of these meanings, which would otherwise remain latent and not understood, and the acquisition of a deeper and direct knowledge of crossed places, is exactly what many travellers expect from the pilgrimage experience. This is fully in line with the Council of Europe goals. This laic dimension of *via peregrinale* as a path of knowledge (related by landscape) and a new *Grand Tour* is the dimension that must be implemented by the project.

Direct observation and walkshops were useful for collecting the contents for translation and communicating to pilgrims, by means of setting up a semiotic infrastructure (material and immaterial) for reading landscape as an interface between insider and outsider culture.

The study was not a detailed analytical survey of the characters of the various components of the landscape, but it was conducted with a holistic and synthetic approach, made possible by a peripatetic analysis based on the practice of walking.

The sequences of the landscape that follow each other also concern scenic aspects designed according to the variety, the diversification and the readability of the relationships within the landscape.

In this process the methodology plays an important role and points out that the cultural routes also bring with them the question of when the landscape project begins and when it starts to trigger interesting processes of territorial development and territorial governance.

The organisation of the expert's *walkshop* and the inhabitant's *walkshop* allows the research team to gather information from different points of view and discover unique features, as well as collect input on how the history and human activities can find new paths of sustainable development.

The overall research has been characterised by this exchange among insiders and outsiders, in the interpretation phase as well in the designing phase. Knowledge and shared interpretations have been generated and it was a significant example of participatory process of governance from the beginning. The *CR* projects come *from the ground*, with a bottom-up process instead of, or together with, a top-down strategy, and the research reflects this approach even in the masterplan. this was one of the main results.

The masterplan clearly identifies the itinerary and the stops, the facilities and the functional options (e.g. accommodation, food supply, etc.) of which a tourist or a contemporary pilgrim may make use. Nevertheless, it does not design everything at the detailed scale. It includes the possibility to interpret the *CR* and its resources, in other words we can say that the masterplan is a process itself. It is the system of the itinerary itself that also gives input on processes with which the local community can interact in this framework, and their activities are call to contribute in the governance process of the *CR*.

This makes us wonder whether the cultural itinerary, interpreted according to this approach, can be an operative *tool* to generate innovative processes of participatory governance focussed on the landscape and to create the groundwork for sustainable development of the territories.

Figures 3a 3b: The pictures show an example of "best practice" in the CR's spatial equipment, with the contribution of Land Art: the place known as "Site Transitoire" by the artist Jean-Paul Philippe in the land of Crete Senesi, with the skyline of Siena in the background.
Photo 3a by Stefano Roncucci; Photo 3b by Chiara Serenelli

Looking at the international framework, the sustainable development planning sector has to tackle global emergencies such as soil conservation, climate change, seismic hazards and vulnerability of the territories (geological risk, abandonment phenomena, etc.). In this context, a cultural itinerary can help increase resilience of landscapes, contributing in building up green economies related to resources efficient policies, the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

The *CR* are able to foster the creativity and interpretive skills of the inhabitants and the small/medium enterprises as well. They can become more reactive to the crises that affect territory, social, economic, cultural fields, also increasing the solidarity that make communities stronger and united when they have to identify the priorities for their life contexts. This is especially evident for those territories that are more affected by the fenomena of abandonment and natural hazards due to their geomorphological, social and economic structures, such as inland, rural and marginal areas.

In this specific context, *CR*s can be a *design tool* for de development of innovative strategies.

Along the via Lauretana it was possible to identify some of this potential. Some were related to the local production and the preservation of the tradition and the landscapes (such as Vescona, along the Via Lauretana Senese), and others identified innovation in terms of contemporary languages and activities in the field of contemporary and performing arts (such as the contemporary artwork by Jean Paul Philippe named "Site transitoire" in the landscape of biancane). Many others of a similar potential can be found along the entire route between Siena and Loreto. In many cases, they need to be discovered and activated by a complex and holistic design process, as this work sought to depict.

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[1] The Santiago Declaration, as the starting point of the European Programme on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, defined a new way for reflecting on the cultural meaning of Europe and on the values expressed by the great network of roads developed across the European Countries. During the following decades the Programme has been developed with many projects and cultural activities at international

level, under the umbrella of the European Institute of Cultural Route based in Luxembourg (www.culture-route.net).

[2] International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) of ICOMOS, ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, Québec, Canada, Ottobre 2008. Cultural Routes occur in a natural and/or cultural context upon which they exert an influence and which they help to characterize and enrich with new dimensions as part of an interactive process The territorial setting, whether natural or cultural (urban or rural), provides the framework of the Cultural Route, gives it its particular atmosphere, characterized by elements and values of both physical and intangible nature, and is fundamental for the comprehension, conservation and enjoyment of the route. International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes (CIIC) ICOMOS, ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, Québec, Canada, Ottobre 2008.

[3] Ettore Repetti (http://stats-1.archeogr.unisi.it/repetti/)

[4] In particular: Catasto Generale della Toscana (General Cadastre of Tuscany Region), Catasto Leopoldino (Historical Cadastre of Tuscany Grand Duchy), section XIX, Archivio di Stato di Siena (National Archive of Siena), various sheets.

[5] We refer here mainly to the general and detailed work of Divo Savelli