

Against urban dislocation: towards a Community Shared Culture and a hyper-connected territory

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Keywords: Dislocation, localization, hyper-connected territory, Community Shared Culture, villages

Topic: 3. Strategies, methodological proposals and designs

Abstract

Dislocation is not an event that happens in space, or even in space. The space itself is dislocation. It is what we can define as “disjunction” of places or even the original partition that does not cease to take place. Dislocation lives thanks to its opposite. In fact it is the condition of every localization.¹

Dislocation in settlement systems appears as an interval between two margins, two regions. Dislocation is necessary to mediate the passage between closed and open systems,² as villages / countrysides and cities. It is shown as an interval, a sequence following a spatial dynamism; the designer should work on this, overcoming the disjunctions.³ So we do not have to act exclusively locally but through system strategies as the “Continent City” by Yona Friedman, or through linear strategies as the recent interventions on the Parisian *périphérique* for the Grand Paris projects. In this way the dislocated, peripheral areas are reconnected among them, distributing services, helping the movement of citizens and re-activating their attention towards “new localizations”. This overturns the concepts of demographic degrowth, it consolidates, integrates and hybridizes local identities generating a “Community Shared Culture” while disseminating services and infrastructures on a hyper-connected territory.

1. Small towns and demographic decline. Why?

In recent decades there has been a contraction and expansion of big cities and an increasing depopulation of small towns; this has been manifested through the rapid demographic decrease and the disappearance of anthropic presence in the territory taken into consideration. The depopulation of small communities seems to be an unstoppable process due to both natural and political/economical motivations (i.e.: earthquakes/ enterprises closures), this involves the deactivation of services used to be generally essential for the survival of any city system, such as schools, health services and so on.⁴ ISTAT shows us disconcerting data⁵ and a demographic decrease due to the lack of primary transport services. To contrast this phenomenon, various types of strategic interventions have been activated in recent years: tourism, targeted recruitment, opening of new *startups*, reassignment of subsidized housing, integration of migrants and so on; apparently these techniques are not sufficient (on their own) to stop population de-growth, but to temporarily stabilize it.⁶ G. Martini, in his article “*Così un Comune su tre rischia di sparire*”, describes the problem considered in this *paper* through statistical

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¹ Goetz, B. [1997]. “La dislocation: critique du lieu”, in Mangematin, M., Younès, C. (edited by), *Lieux contemporains*, Paris: Éditions de la Passion.

² Crotti, S. [2000]. *Figure architettoniche: soglia*, Milano: Unicopoli.

³ Cfr.: Milocco Borlini, M. [2019]. *Against Metropolitan Dispersion*, <http://www.urbanisticatre.uniroma3.it/dipsu/?portfolio=against-metropolitan-dispersion>, 4/2019.

⁴ Cfr.: Maggiolo, A. [2017]. *L'Italia dei piccoli comuni a rischio spopolamento: “Siamo a un punto di non ritorno”*, <http://www.today.it/cronaca/spopolamento-piccoli-comuni-italiani.html>, 4/2019.

⁵ ISTAT data, cfr. in bibliography, 7.1 Data.

⁶ Cfr.: Maggiolo, A., Op. Cit.

data; the same author defines the demographic decline as a “*settlement discomfort*”⁷ and through the data collected by Legambiente⁸ it expresses this *malaise* by stating that in very few decades the small municipalities (<5000 inhabitants) have lost at least 5% of the population that has moved to larger cities, where services and quality of life are better; the generalized demographic decline means that these small towns are forgotten, or, for political and economic reasons, they are less touristic, risking a total desertification.⁹

2. Connections

One of the hypotheses and strategies that derive directly from the Italian Government’s administrative concerns are the unification of the small villages to guarantee continuity of services and their dissemination on the territory, while trying to reactivate (timidly) the local life or the attractiveness of places; as G. Martini states «it is the paradox of the country of the thousand bell towers: to save them, it is up to them to overcome them».¹⁰ F. Arminio also declares «countries do not network. [...] Dear little villages of Italy, if you don’t make a network the cities will devour you»¹¹. The same author asserts that there is a political, economical and cultural abyss between the city centers and the suburbs; this emptiness is what can be understood as a marginal space; margins are often forgotten, left to themselves favoring the shutdown of primary and secondary services, such as hospitals or territorial clinics and/or commercial and gastronomic services.¹² If countries do not make a network they will never succeed in overcoming the problems exposed in this essay. The possible strategies need to take in account tourism (which alone is not enough), but also the systematic reconnection of services on a wider territory, with the consequent ways and methods to make each service reachable as quickly as possible for any user target.

Having introduced the concept of margin and difference, it is now possible to talk about dislocation. In fact, to unite, we must displace. What is the etymologically meaning of dislocation?

Dislocation noun

*Origin: Late Middle English: from Old French, or from medieval Latin dislocatio (n-), from the verb dislocate, based on Latin locare ‘to place’. A situation in a person or an industry or economy, is no longer working in the usual way or place; disturbance from a proper, original, or usual place or state; disruption of an established order.*¹³

2.1. The Dislocation

*Dislocation is not an event that happens in space, or even in space. The space itself is dislocation. It is what we can define as “disjunction” of places or even the original partition that does not cease to take place. Dislocation lives thanks to its opposite. In fact it is the condition of every localization.*¹⁴

Architects and planners do not have to act on the territory exclusively locally but through systemic or linear strategies. In this way the dislocated, peripheral areas are reconnected among them, distributing services, while helping the movement of citizens and re-activating their attention towards “new localizations”. The dislocation is often associated with the concept of margin, which is also an «impulse to reconquer a lost original space».¹⁵

We cannot conceive an urban agglomeration that does not operate with this original partition between the center and the town periphery. The dislocation, the difference and the margin define the continuity of space;

⁷ Martini, G., [2016]. *Così un Comune su tre rischia di sparire*, <https://www.lastampa.it/2016/06/01/italia/cos-un-comune-su-tre-rischia-di-sparire-A15PSjke17bAbQybVq6zO/pagina.html>, 4/2019.

⁸ Legambiente, https://www.legambiente.it/sites/default/files/docs/dossier_piccoli_e_fuori_dal_comune_piccolicomuni2016.pdf 4/2019.

⁹ Cfr.: Martini, G., Op. Cit.

¹⁰ Martini, G., Op. Cit.

¹¹ Arminio, F. [2019]. *Cari piccoli borghi d’Italia, se non fate rete le città vi divoreranno*, https://www.repubblica.it/robinson/2019/03/04/news/i_paesi_non_fanno_rete220681599/?fbclid=IwAR2iznN_VHmT5jgkIcMwhq7R1P4Rtv4EozLQ01mWFFkYimRIai0YAlyM8, 4/2019.

¹² Cfr.: Arminio, F., Op. Cit.

¹³ *Dislocation*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dislocation>

¹⁴ Goetz, B., Op. Cit.

¹⁵ Crotti, S., Op. Cit.

disjunction and localization live thanks to their univocal and inseparable relationship, without which both words would lose meaning and reality; this relationship generates “events” that we define as tension and contrast that are going to creep into our urban territory; through them it is possible to mediate the above mentioned contrasts to define a balance between the forces, to define a design towards an urban, territorial and landscape union.¹⁶ These spaces of “change of state” generate all the directions that – if well pursued – create a urban (re)design that recalls the symbolic density of the margin, its thickness and its power of union and separation. It is essential to be able to recognize and disarticulate from an urban system old and new dislocations and locations, to understand and (re)enhance a territory with architectural and landscape interventions aimed at revaluing the differences included in the new contemporary urban (*infra*)structures. As noted by JP Gavard-Perret, «the concept of ‘dislocation’ which seems to interest contemporary space is re-contextualized in the long term».¹⁷ According to the same author, the term itself contains a force that decrees the dispersion of space – of urban centers and suburbs – as well as the dispersion of their inhabitants; B. Goetz does not want to selfishly conquer the ground in a static way, he wants to liquefy it, «he borrows it, [...] in relation to the new demands of fluidity that would remain to be discussed».¹⁸

2.2. Location and transitional spaces

It is now possible to analyze the dichotomy of dislocation/localization in the space that surrounds and composes our cities. In fact, in settlement systems it appears as an interval between two margins that are part of two or more different regions; the aforementioned interval is constituted in situations in which it is necessary to *mediate* the passage between closed and open systems, between “full and void”, between dense urban agglomerations and those in process of desertification and – more generally – between the natural landscapes and the man-made ones.¹⁹ The aforementioned dichotomy condenses various correspondences just as if it were a generating nucleus of transformations to recreate – as before mentioned – new situations, new places linked to each other by different and unexpected relationships. Locating and displacing are at the same time separation and reunion; in this way interrupted natural and anthropized landscapes are (re)connected with “objects”, “bridges”, “meshes” and “networks” strategies: «the thresholds and spaces of transition become a place: the place where the world turns upside-down».²⁰

3. Possible strategies – Case studies

The contemporary designer should work on the disjunctions of territories, through “paths”, networks and “significant points” to reconvert the places under desertification into attractive places. Probably the process of housing escape cannot be completely stopped, therefore it is necessary to proceed through interventions that point to a re-localization of the services to make them attractive not only to the inhabitants but also to possible visitors.

Each village “in danger of extinction” should be reconnected with the larger city loop through the enhancement of transport services, including bicycle, pedestrian and landscape paths; in this way it would be possible to proceed toward a reticular system that creates continuity and re-locates cultural and gastronomic attractions (including primary services), favoring a circular movement of the inhabitant within the same (new) city and territory system. This would allow the avoidance of the preference to live in the bigger cities. It is now conceivable to look at some strategies, through case studies, divided by key words as Global and Linear.

3.1. Global Strategy: Continent City by Y. Friedman

Friedman’s Continent City contains some of the points discussed in this essay. Undoubtedly, from the

¹⁶ Cfr.: Crotti, S., Op. Cit.

¹⁷ Gavard-Perret, JP. [2018]. *Benoît Goetz, La dislocation. Architecture et philosophie*, <http://www.lelitteraire.com/?p=39790>, 4/2019.

¹⁸ Gavard-Perret, JP, Op. Cit.

¹⁹ Cfr.: Crotti, S. [2000], Op. Cit.

²⁰ Boudier, P. [1970]. *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*, Paris: Seuil.

architect's point of view, cities must be organized according to the needs of the inhabitants, as active and reactive “connectors” and “exchangers” within a static urban system; Friedman's interpretations are manifested through the ideas of reticular hyper-connected and “containing” systems between different territories thanks to the infrastructure of transport (such as the TGV), in a utopian project of intertwining the vast European territory.²¹

The organization that emerges from its theories develops on different levels of connection and grouping between several metropolitan areas, cities, suburbs – even the most remote ones – to transform every point of the network, as stated by E. marco, in «real drivers of the economic, political, social and cultural processes of continental history. [in which] the material networks of cities are relatively immobile and poorly adapted to change, as opposed to communication networks that are flexible to the highest degree».²² With these premises it is easy to understand how the architect already foresaw the abolition of the “dead times or places” of a given territory considering climatic changes, traffic flows (home-work), even foreseeing and studying the suitable “situation” that is synthesized in what it could be defined as spatial dynamism in a super-connected territory.²³

3.2. Linear Strategy: Paris, Massena

Although it is not a project for small towns, the planning project for the Massena Sector (Fig. 1) in Paris – *masterplan* by C. de Portzamparc – it could be considered as linear. That is because it (re)connects and exceeds the pre-existing urban *caesuras*: the river, the railway and the *périphérique*. It fits directly into a “buffer zone”, that is located in the space of the margin and border between the hyper-densified metropolis and the first peripheral areas; the linearity lies in the reconnection of the spatial sequences between the banks of the Seine, the Grande Bibliothèque, the straight boulevard Massena and the final Hub of connection with the *périphérique* and from there on – optionally – with the city center or the suburbs.²⁴ On this line the areas destined for residential buildings are arranged on the sides and they are characterized by the typical fragmentation of Portzamparc's open block .

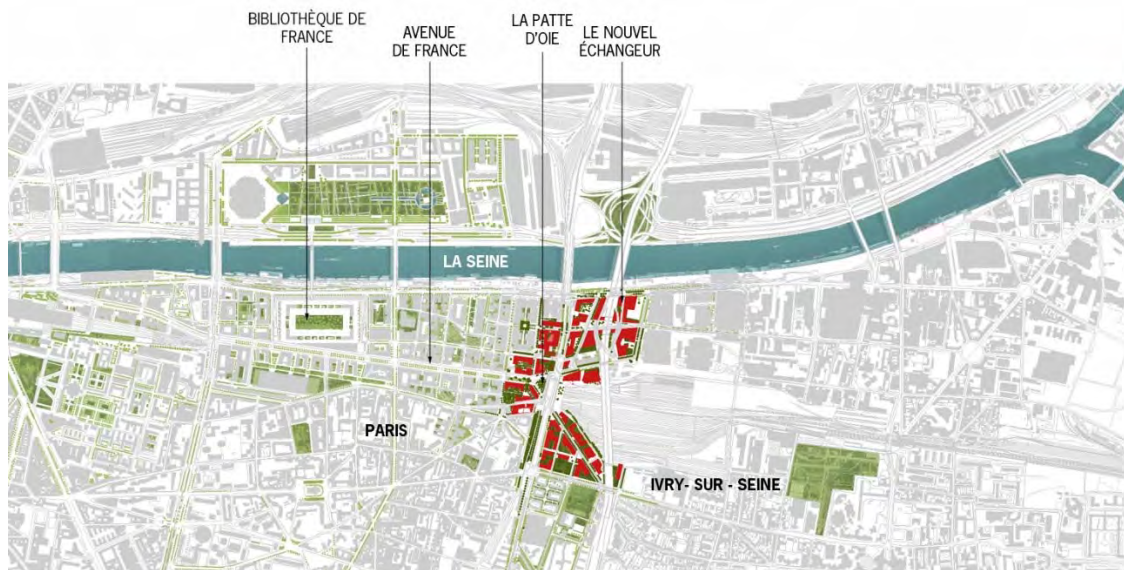


Fig. 1 – Paris, Massena, Masterplan, Ateliers Lion associés – architectes urbanistes paysagistes, – Source: <http://atelierslion.com/en/projets/massena-bruneseau/>

²¹ Di Marco, E. [2014]. *L'Architettura Mobile di Yona Friedman* in “La Strega Mascherata” di Colonel Durruti, <https://emilianodimarco.wordpress.com/2014/07/16/larchitettura-mobile-di-yona-friedman-in-la-strega-maschera-di-colonel-durruti/>, 4/2019.

²² Di Marco, E., Op. Cit.

²³ Cfr.: Lambertucci, F. [2002]. “Sezione”, in Isola, A., *Manuale e Atlante, forme insediative e infrastrutture*, Politecnico di Torino, Venezia: Marsilio, pp. 205-206.

²⁴ Cfr.: Segapeli, S. [2008]. *La città per “frammenti”, Un nuovo paesaggio urbano per Paris Seine Rive Gauche*, http://www.vg-hortus.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=287&Itemid=56, 4/2019.

3.3. Analytical experiments, synthetic possibilities: Navelli

During the Biennale Session by Politecnico di Milano (AUIC), held at Venice Arsenal on the 23rd November 2018, entitled “Territori Fragili” by Prof. I. Valente, Prof. E. Corradi and Prof. C. Cozza, questions were asked about “Territorial Fragilities”²⁵ typical of the demographic decline and desertification of small city centers of inland Italy. One of the case examined was the town of Navelli, in the Abruzzo region (Fig. 2).

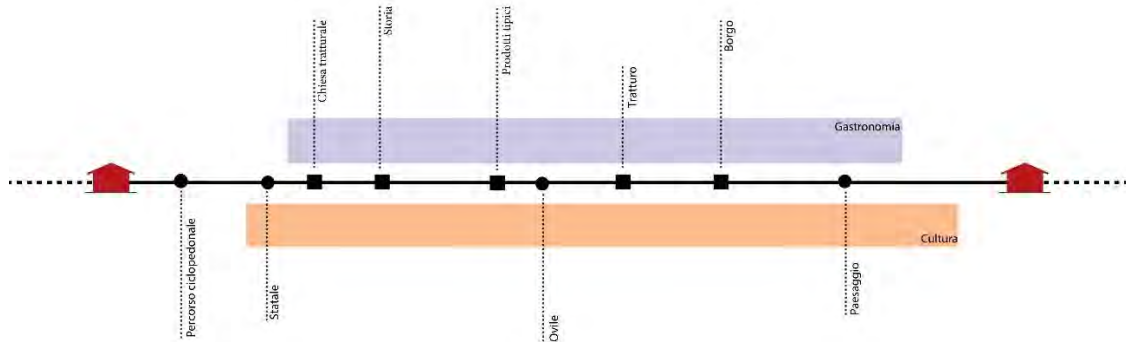


Fig. 2 – Linear Navelli, P. Paganelli, A. Rosa

The country, like many others in the surrounding area, is at great risk of desertification and lacks primary and secondary services for the community. It was enlightening to see how some research groups have developed pre-design strategies throughout the surrounding area (on a large scale), trying to set up a multi-front activation circuit: tourism, gastronomy and social topics.

Some groups have based their reconnection of the hyper-territory on gastronomic routes (saffron is one of the typical products) that could allow the creation of a territorial community consortium (integrating the existing ones) leaving all small local identities and cultures pers persist (Fig. 3).

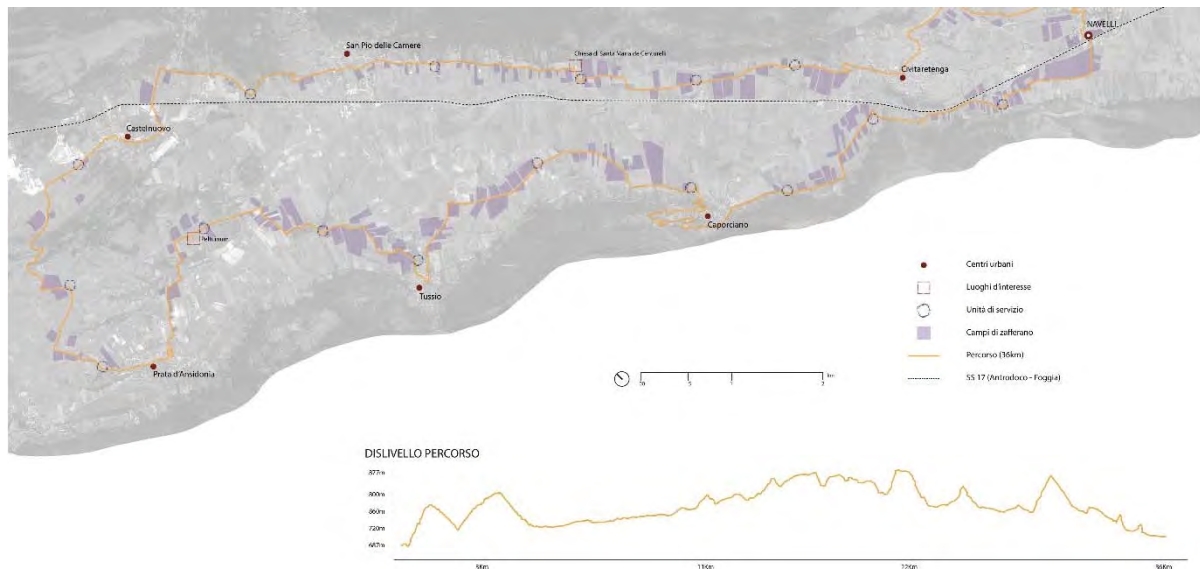


Fig. 3 – Saffron route, P. Paganelli, A. Rosa

Other groups have enhanced the pedestrian and cycle paths interconnected with the presence of sheepfolds or farms, bringing them back into operation at all times of the year and not for merely tourist purposes, but also for educational and training functions (Fig. 4).

²⁵ Cfr.: Seminar, Biennale Sessions, *Territori Fragili*, 23/09/2019, by Prof. Ilaria Valente, Prof. Emilia Corradi, Prof. Cassandra Cozza, <http://www.planum.net/biennale-sessions-territori-fragili-il-rischio-come-occasione-di-cambiamento>, 5/2019.

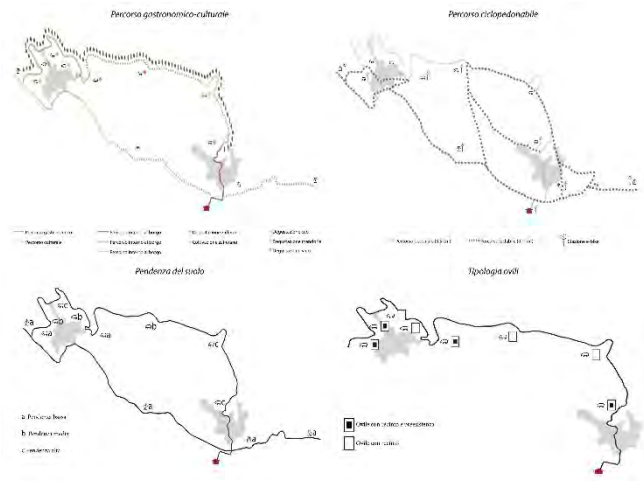
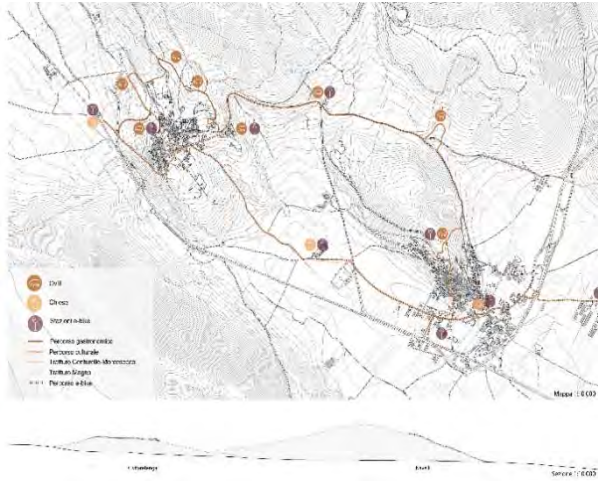


Fig. 4 – S. Cima, G. Cipolla, T. Ferrari; sheepfolds or farms route

Finally, there is a proposal to maintain the seasonal use of the routes that connect the municipalities of the territory with the redesign and/or redevelopment of existing routes between the various municipalities, turning them into bicycle and pedestrian paths for the hottest months and on cross-country ski runs and snowshoeing for the coldest ones, guaranteeing the user a “totem” for resting and sheltering every 4 kilometers (Fig. 5).

The synthesis of the experiments just expressed can be traced back to the initial dissert ations: small municipalities must network, maintaining their local identity, but renegotiating a territorial culture through repopulation mechanisms that are not based only on tourism, but also on culture and sociality, transforming them from forgotten poles to attractive ones. Logically, the loops presented by the researches shown above are (re)attached to an even larger system, to the infrastructural one (presence of a state road) and to public transport that leads to the big city which – if duly strengthened – would make people choose these small villages to live in with low house costs thanks to the time limitation of “home-work / village-city” routes.

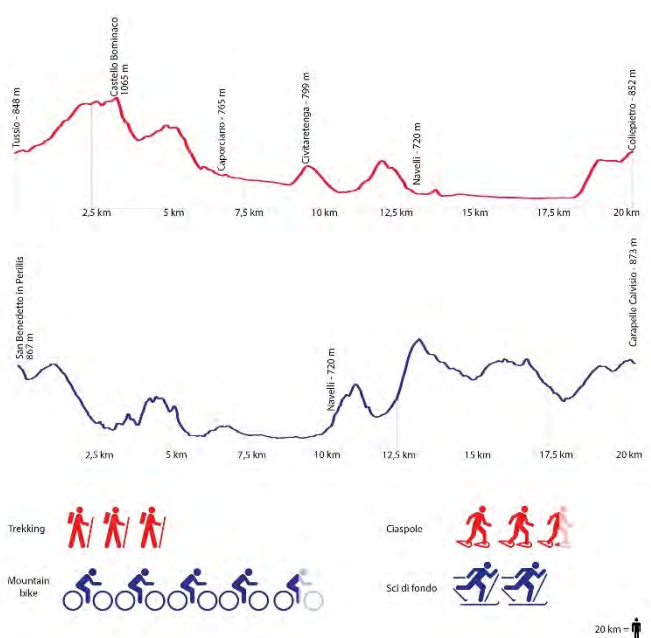
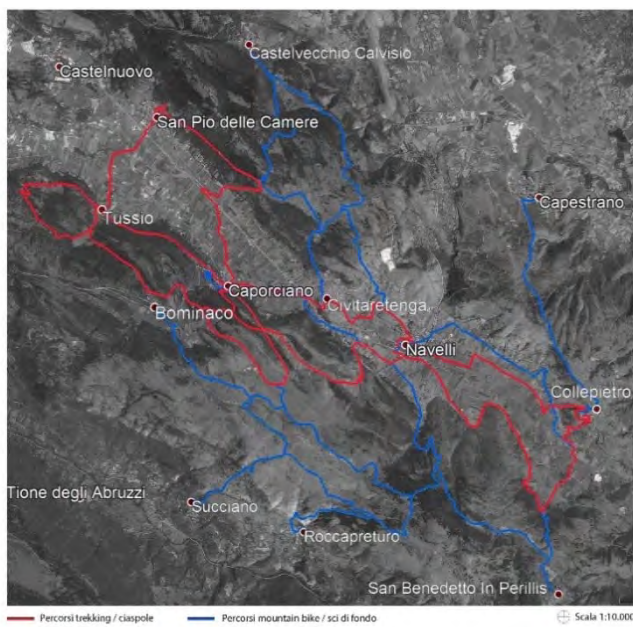


Fig. 5 – A. Salomone, M. Salhi, E. Silva; Summer/winter loops

4. New localizations

To activate new (re)localizations in a displaced territory, it is crucial to think of larger systems of knowledge union, services and cultures. To better define the idea of a generalized urban sharing it is necessary to explain concepts such as “imprinting” and “identity”.

imprint noun

*Impress or stamp (a mark or outline) on a surface; Fix (an idea) firmly in someone’s mind; Zoology – (of a young animal) how to recognize (another animal, person, or thing) as a parent or other object of habitual trust.*²⁶

The concept of identity and imprinting, their difference and similarity, is often found in the writings and lectures of A. Saggio; he defines *imprinting* as: «the presence of native figures, imprinted in the mind in the first years of life, and that return in infinite renegotiations during adulthood, as a kind of lost paradise or promised land to be constantly recreated, in new infinite presences»²⁷ from which we can deduce a fundamental word: *the renegotiation* (of the landscape, territory, services). For the same author, the Landscape, the rural and industrial territory is an «aesthetic representation and a sharing of values: it is continually renegotiated, continually rethought».²⁸ Everything revolves around the concept of renegotiation, as a continuous and subjective reinterpretation of reality through the human innate and primitive knowledge of things. To explore more deeply the role of the “native figures” it is essential to understand first what “memory” is; it is not a mathematical archive of data from which to draw at the moment of need, because this would entail a mental closure that would lead to a cancellation of the creative process such as not allowing an understanding of the breadth of the cultural and territorial whole (system) to which someone is making reference.²⁹ Through the process of renegotiation it is instead possible to give body and substance to a regenerative process of memory that opens to an evolution that generates “stimulating” situations and – under the effect of a continuous rethinking process – brings out the possibility of new cultural, identity and historical extra-municipal or extra-territorial dynamics: the communities gather around to a “common feeling” that makes them complicit and supportive, tending mainly within the same whole, the same margin or municipality. We should aim towards a sort of “collective identity” which is an integral part of the (new) territorial landscape or of what could be defined as hyper-landscape.³⁰ Identity and memory are anchored to the ground through concepts like “share to not forget”, but this is not enough. In fact, it is not sufficient for large urban centers, nor for peripheral areas: «cities need countries; countries need cities. We need to facilitate the alliance between urban peripheral forms and rural peripheral forms: not in an antagonistic form, but in a collaborative and supportive ways».³¹

Identity noun

*Who a person is, that the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others; algebra an equation (= mathematical [statement](#)) that is true for every value given to a variable (= number That can change); the reputation, characteristics, etc. of a person or organization that makes the public think about them in a particular way; who a person is, or information that proves who a person is, for example, their name and date of birth.*³²

*The fact of being who or what a person or thing is; the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is; a close similarity or affinity.*³³

²⁶ *Imprint*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/imprint>.

²⁷ Cfr.: Saggio, A., [2010]. *Architettura e Modernità*, Roma: Carrocci.

²⁸ Saggio, A. [2016]. “Paesaggi culturali”, in Piccinno, T. M., et al. (edited by), *Roma-Cosmo, Materia, Cultura*, Raleigh, USA: Edizioni Lulu, pp. 126-135.

²⁹ Cfr. Milocco Borlini, M., di Loreto, L. [2016]. “L’impronta del paesaggio”, in Piccinno, T. M., et al. (edited by), *Roma-Cosmo, Materia, Cultura*, Raleigh, USA: Edizioni Lulu, pp. 126-135.

³⁰ Cfr.: Milocco Borlini, M., di Loreto, L., Op. Cit.

³¹ Deiana, E. (interview) in Maggiolo, A. [2017]. *L’Italia dei piccoli comuni a rischio spopolamento: “Siamo a un punto di non ritorno”*, <http://www.today.it/cronaca/spopolamento-piccoli-comuni-italiani.html>, 4/2019.

³² *Identity*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/identity>.

³³ *Identity*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/identity>.

*Western tradition thinks of identity, both individual and collective, as an internal space, permanent and stable, autonomous and independent of the other in general, always represented as external, foreign and therefore experienced as a potential threat.*³⁴

By defining the identity of a village, there is always a limit that F. Vitale calls «defense of territorial integrity»,³⁵ lived as a selfish struggle to belong to one's own borders. Therefore there is generally a perimeter and solid closure of villages or small towns when we talk about sharing, renegotiation, exchange and union. The same author, in the essay «Politiche della Casa. Note su Jacques Derrida, Architettura e Decostruzione.» states that “today, ultimately, the relationship to the other, experienced as a threat to the community, turns out to be at the same time, the irreducible condition of the life of any community». ³⁶ This passage summarizes the concepts previously expressed about the dislocation and specifically those expressed by B. Goetz in which each localization responds to delocalization principles that manifest themselves with the migratory activities of man (since ancient times) moved by strategic, military or agricultural choices; this means that they move searching for a site that offers more services and/or activities inherent to it or included in it. Synthetically, a stable localization requires a local (or marginal) difference, a location that has created displacements in the territory taken into consideration, thus recreating new places:³⁷ municipality, village, suburb, hamlet and so on.

5. Community Shared Culture

It is necessary to rethink the already defined spaces as changing and open ones, in which – as in the case of urban desertification areas – the renegotiation and opening to the neighboring villages is an inclusive and non-exclusive condition, in which some principles can be perceived collectively as a “common sharing culture”, while maintaining identities and/or original, local imprints, without excluding the particularities of each place taken into consideration.

We need to give “place to the place”, we need to renegotiate and rejoin more urban realities (settlements) to obtain – at least hypothetically – a demographic growth of the “ghost towns”; as F. Vitale recalls, «architecture is capable of giving a concrete, stable and lasting form to identity, conceived in terms of stable presence, interiority, family intimacy closed in on itself in defense of itself»,³⁸ but the sharing of local cultures and the strengthening of services between different communities is a possible solution to solve the problems (raised by the above quoted author) related to urban, extra-urban and provincial desertification.

If, as B. Goetz reminds us, *dislocation is the condition of every location*,³⁹ due to its “dynamism”, to the potential anthropic shift, it is a must to think that opening up to larger systems (or to an intertwining of multiple systems) that embrace different communities, in a continuous sharing and strengthening of services overturns the concepts of demographic degrowth, it consolidates, integrates and hybridizes local identities generating a “Community Shared Culture” while disseminating services and infrastructures on the hyper-connected territory of the future.

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³⁴ Vitale, F. [2010]. “Politiche della casa. Note su Jacques Derrida, Architettura e Decostruzione”, in Taddio, L., *Costruire Abitare Pensare*, Milano: Mimesis, pp. 342-357.

³⁵ Vitale, F., Op. Cit.

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