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# **Design and territory of origin**

adding value to local products and identities

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## **DESIGN IN TRANSFORMATION**

**(preface by *Ezio Manzini e Anna Meroni*)**

Design is undergoing transformation. We have seen great changes in its operational horizons. Change has also been observed both in the tools used and in the people who, consciously or not, practise design. There is nothing new or unusual in these observations: design has to change.

This book is evidence of this change: Lia Krucken takes us through a study that goes to the core of several themes in contemporary design. Integrating knowledge that cuts across various disciplines, the author examines an unconventional sphere in the field of design – territory, biodiversity, local products – and the work takes on a perspective that is clearly interdisciplinary.

The book, *Design and Territory: giving value to local identities and products* is therefore evidence of a change in horizon, towards a vast universe of potential for creating quality in products and services. Two contradictory aspects can be identified in the way that design is being transformed: on the one hand may be seen an accentuation of the spectacular character of its interventions, the media role of its actors, with design becoming an integral part of the communication system and with (some) designers becoming part of the “star system.” Design, in this way takes on an extraordinary visibility, such as has never before been seen.

On the other hand, contemporary design has taken on other forms and directions, some of which are described in this work. “New Design” has adopted a systematic vision that confronts the complexity of social networks, that develops a capacity for listening, and that operates within the diffuse phenomena of creativity and entrepreneurship which characterize contemporary society. In this way, design takes on an active role, both in the transformational processes in operation and those which are to come, in the face of the many and complex challenges that the future holds.

The second evolutionary line, in our opinion, confers on design a potentially strategic role in the definition of new ideas of well-being and the strategies for achieving them. Yet, in the interim, this conception of design is still poorly understood with regards to its potential. In part, this situation is due to the fact that design, from this perspective, takes on a form that is complex and unphotogenic. In addition, it represents a break with tradition: many individuals that successfully practice these emerging ways of “doing design” are not professional designers and do not perceive of themselves as such. And, vice versa, many designers, professionally trained in the discipline, do not recognize this aspect of the

activity as constituting design.

In this ambit, design encounters the theme of transition aimed towards sustainability, in a way that is potentially fertile. It is increasingly evident that life styles and productive models must change in order to reduce the impact on the environment. Yet it is not so clear that this change must be radical or systematic. A transformation, not only in terms of technology, but also and above all social, - our behaviors, habits and ways of life- is essential. We must learn to live better, consuming less and regenerating the social web.

The notion of system – applied from the perspective of sustainability – considers the environmental and social spheres to be inseparable and, thus, views territory as a socio-geographic entity. This concept becomes fundamental in any proposal for practical and promising solutions. In particular, the theme of local resources (products, knowledge, and people) and providing value that benefits communities and local economies is of great interest and has immediate value from a design perspective as we have shown above.

In these initiatives, capabilities, practices and local production can be discerned a value that cannot be recast in other ways. This value creation must stimulate new ways of thinking of development, new behaviors, and models (social, economic and entrepreneurial). In this scenario, and particularly with regards to food production and those communities that develop around food (“food communities”), we can highlight the noteworthy vision and activities of the international movement, Slow Food. Originating in Italy, this movement proposes to protect and give value to local products, as well as to the sociobiodiversity from which they stem. In this way, the movement contributes to the protection and valorization of identity and sustainability of territories and their populations.

This book believes that only a vision that fuses a systematic concept of territorial quality (not only the products, but also the processes and relationships) with a concept of communication aimed at favoring local networks ( between producers, consumers and amongst themselves) can create promising solutions in terms of sustainability. This approach gives equal weight to proposing a strategic vision of sustainability, in which are taken into consideration technical interventions on materials, sources of energy and logistics, in conjunction with project activities aimed at ways of life, consumption, and production that meet a profile of quality of experience (the emotions and pleasure experienced in the use of a good or service) and of value (the ethical and critical choices).

The “discovery “ of the importance of local resources in the generation of products and services with these types of value ( real and perceived) for the system that conceives of them and profits from them, steers us toward a definition of a new concept of quality. A quality that associates products (in their biological and cultural diversities) with producers, to the region of production (the networks that the author defines as value networks) and to consumers, - who are invited, in various ways, to participate in its definition, becoming co-producers. Quality, from this perspective, requires time in order to be produced and appreciated. In other words, we can state that it is necessary to slow down time and the ways in which we relate to people, places and goods. Quality, therefore, requires competence (and thus effort and practice) in order to be recognized.

In this context, the designer is someone who, more than other professionals, possesses the capacity and potential to create new models of reference, to imagine new lifestyles based on these diverse orders of values and qualities. For this reason, a contribution is required from the designer: to visualize scenarios and translate them into desirable visions of products and services that are characterized by a relationship to the territory and the community and, in this fashion, stimulate the recognition of its identity. These products and services must be seen as the results of the activity within a network of local systems, systems which possess a soul, a unique identity, a global dimension and, at the same time, an economic/productive viability.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The valorization of resources and local products is a theme that is extremely rich and complex, as products simultaneously involve physical and cognitive dimensions. It is necessary to perceive the attributes of the local context - the territory and manner in which each product is conceived and made – in order to understand the relationships that take shape around production and the consumption of products.

The design perspective can clearly assist in this complex task of mediating production and consumption, tradition and innovation, local qualities and global relationships.

Local products are cultural manifestations, tightly bound to the territory and the community which produces them. These products are the result of a network, woven over time, that involves biodiversity products, traditional ways of fabrication, customs, and also consumption habits. This aspect of the product and its link to the territory and society which produces it is represented by the concept of terroir – which we will discuss later.

In order that consumers (frequently located far from a product's territory of origin) recognize these qualities, it is necessary to efficiently communicate them, by means of brands, packaging and other materials. This task of "translation" or "mediation" requires much sensitivity and responsibility and is extremely important, as it consists of developing an interface of common understanding between producers and consumers.

Thus, in order to make territorial resources dynamic and give value to intangible cultural heritage, it is fundamental to recognize and make recognizable values and local qualities. This is one of the principal tasks of the designer.

The contributions of design to the valorization of local products can be grouped into three lines:

1. promote the quality of products, territories, and production processes;
2. support communication, bringing consumers and producers closer and intensifying territorial relationships;
3. support the development of sustainable productive configurations and value chains, aimed at strengthening micro and small businesses.

Like the development of conditions for the purpose of converting the potential of local resources into a real and lasting benefit for the communities involved, promoting "visibility" is a need that globalization is

rendering more urgent and presents a great challenge for emerging economies. This consideration is the point of departure of this book and will be developed in chapter 1.

In chapter 2 we shall examine the various qualities and values of local products. Quality in a wide form can be analyzed as the result of: a) an experience; b) a complex, which incorporates territory, product and producing community; c) relationships that are established between local-local and local-global. In this way, "quality" is constituted in a wide and dynamic form, deriving, above all, from an interaction.

Interactions constitute a base for developing social connections. In this sense, it is essential to think of ways of bringing closer together and linking producers, consumers and the other agents involved in the production and intermediation of goods, services and information. It is precisely in mediating between the universe of production and that of consumption that unexpected solutions of intermediation (involving commercialization, exchange and distribution) can emerge. In this way design has much to contribute, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

In chapter 4 we will examine more deeply the relationships established in the production and consumption of local goods for the purposes of developing a systematic view of the process of creation and exchange of value (exchange of information and knowledge, tangible goods and capital). We will refer to this array of activities, involving agents related to the production of resources and primary material, to transformation, distribution and to consumption, use and disposal of products and services, as the value network. It is important to show that use or consumption of the product is also part of the network, and, therefore, including the consumer is fundamental. Also part of the network are the agents that sustain its formation and development (research and educational institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, etc.). We will examine these vertical networks– showing the dynamics and contrasts that global value chains impose – as well as the horizontal relationships, illustrated by experiences of intermediation in small production.

In chapter 5 we will look, in particular, at sociobiodiversity product networks. In order to understand the systemic value of biodiversity, it is essential to visualize the relationships between natural resources and the products and services that are derived from them or that are related. Products such as manioc, juçara palm, pequi, umbu, buriti and mate – among many others – represent a complex array of relationships,

strengthening its economic, environmental, social and cultural importance for society.

In chapter 6, we will analyze three cases, for the purpose of revealing important aspects of value networks and in territory and local product valorization projects; a) the limoncello of Sorrento and the Amalfi coast, b) lavender from Provence and c) the guarana of Satéré Mawé

Finally, on the basis of the analysis of these cases, we will discuss actions for the future. This is the basis of chapter 7: to stimulate the development of strategies for the valorization of products and territories.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the text, a glossary of some technical terms and expressions is to be found at the back of this book.

## **1 STARTING POINT**

### **The context**

Megabiodiverse countries, such as Brazil, possess a great wealth of cultures and ethnicities as well as biodiversity products. These riches constitute a base for the development of products that are strongly linked to origin and local community. Frequently, however, existing resources are not exploited in a sustainable manner (economic, social and environmental) and do not generate wealth or improve the quality of life of the local and, in a wider form, national community.

The search for alternatives to protect intangible cultural heritage and retain and add greater value to products that are strongly local in character is becoming more urgent with increased globalization, which is provoking a confrontation of systems and multiple paradigms. To create the conditions whereby the potential of local resources is converted into a real and lasting benefit for the communities represents a major challenge for emerging economies.

It is necessary to promote innovative and sustainable solutions that bring producers and consumers closer, providing transparency and strengthening the values that span production and consumption.

To stimulate recognition of the qualities and values related to a local product – qualities related to territory, resources, and knowledge incorporated in its production and its significance for the producing community – is one way of contributing to making the history behind the product visible to society. To tell this “story” signifies communicating historical, cultural and social elements associated with the product, making it possible for the consumer to evaluate and duly appreciate the

product, as well as develop a favorable image of the territory of origin.

This visibility can contribute to the protection of cultural heritage and diversity, and, in this manner, to the preservation of the cultural inheritance passed on to those who will inherit the use of the territory. It also contributes to the adoption and valorization of sustainable practices in production, in commercialization and actual consumption.

### **Producers and consumers: reducing the opacity of the system**

Producers and consumers constitute, jointly, the driving force behind the valorization of products based on local resources. We can see two convergent movements:

1. on the part of the producers ( or local community), with respect to the need to develop strategies that assign “market value” to local products appropriate to the value that these products represent for the community that produces them;
2. on the part of the consumers – related to the growing search for healthy and authentic products, whose history is traceable and can be appreciated, in terms of economic and socioenvironmental sustainability.

One of the principal points examined in this book is the need to develop forms of mediation that are advantageous for both producers and consumers, as well as reduce the opacity of the system.

It is important to consider that a product or service is the result of actions developed by a set of persons and organizations in time and space. These networks frequently develop from the synergy among agents and are based on mutual interest arising from interaction. Its development can stimulate the valorization of products and services linked to a given territory, also giving value to the various localities.

With globalization, one of the greatest challenges is to communicate the qualities and values of local products to people who are unaware of their context of origin and history, in such a way that they can assimilate and recognize them. For this to occur, it is necessary to understand the manner in which people perceive products. Therefore, to know how value and quality are perceived is fundamental for defining communication strategies for the origin of a product, its mode of production and significance.

### **Notes to Chapter 1**

<sup>1</sup> The intangible cultural heritage means “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. Source: Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO, and the Instituto de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN.

<sup>1</sup> “The respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security”. Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001).

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Biodiversity products**

These are understood to be products aimed at and /or formulated from biodiversity products. They are considered to be “intermediary products, among which are: natural ingredients for the cosmetic and pharmaceutical sectors (essential oils, pigments, latex, resins, gums and medicinal plants), and final products, such as lumber, nuts, tropical and artisanal fruit”. Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \_UNCTAD (2002)

### **Biological diversity**

The variability of live organisms of all origins, including, among others, land, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the complex ecologies that make them up: also includes diversity within species, and between species and ecosystems. Source: CDB (1998).

### **Biological resources**

These include genetic resources, organisms or part of these, populations or any other biotic component of ecosystems, of real or potential utility or value for humanity. Source: Convenção da Diversidade Biológica - CDB (1998)

### **Commercial agents**

In the context of this research, these are understood to be the agents involved in the negotiation and commercialization of merchandise at various levels of production. This includes traders, dealers and brokers.

### **Commodity**

Any unprocessed good, generally of agricultural/animal origin or mineral or vegetal extraction, produced on a large, world -wide scale, and with homogenous physical characteristics, whatever the origin, generally destined for external trade and whose price is determined by international offer and need. Source: Dicionário HOUAISS da Língua Portuguesa (2001)

### **Ecosystem**

A dynamic complex of vegetal, animal, microorganic communities and the inorganic medium with which they interact as a functional unit Source: CDB (1998)

### **Edapho-climatic conditions**

Characteristics of a region referring to climate and soil.

### **Conservation**

Preservation of biological diversity, in recognition of its intrinsic value and ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, cultural recreational and esthetic values, to meet, in a sustainable manner, the necessities and aspirations of both present and future generations of humanity. Source MMA, (2000).

### **Design system**

Array of activities and agents in design and their relationships with the socio-economic-productive-national context, with the objective of delineating a map of the design resources of a country. Fonte: Sistema Design Italia - SDI (2006).

## **Ecology**

Science which studies the relationships of living beings, both between themselves and the organic or inorganic medium in which they live: study of the reciprocal relationships between man and his moral, social and economic media. Source: Dicionário HOUAISS da Língua Portuguesa (2001)

## **Ethical Commerce and Solidarity or Just Commerce**

Consists of a commercial partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equality in the international commerce. Contributes to sustainable development, giving proportionately better conditions of exchange to marginalized producers and workers, as well as greater guarantee of their rights. Source: International Fair Trade Association - IFAT (2004).

## **Intangible Cultural Heritage**

These are *"the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity."* Source: Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO, and the Instituto de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN

## **Life Cycle**

The life cycle of a product or process involves all phases through which it passes from the start, with the extraction of raw materials ( in the case of a product), passing through all intermediary phases of processing, manufacture, and transport, up to its use, and, finally, disposal of its remains. Source: Environmental Protection Agency – EPA (1993).

## **Local and native knowledge**

This consists of the cumulative and complex array of knowledge, know-how, practices and representation that is maintained and developed by peoples in their interaction with the natural environment. These cognitive systems are part of an array that includes, furthermore, language, connection to a region, spirituality and world vision. Many different terms are used to refer to this knowledge: traditional ecological knowledge, indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, knowledge of rural people and agriculturalists, ethno-biology/ethno-zoology; ethno-science, folklore-related science, indigenous science. Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO (2005).

## **Local Community**

A human group that is distinct by reason of its cultural conditions, that is organized, traditionally, in the same area, by successive generations and particular customs, and that preserves its social and economic institutions. Source: Ministério do Meio Ambiente do Brasil - MMA (2000).

## **Local Productive Arrangement**

Agglomeration of companies located in the same territory, who are involved in productive specialization and maintain links in terms of articulation, interaction, cooperation, and learning between themselves and other local agents such as

government, business associations, credit, educational and research institutions,  
Sources: Redesist (1997) and Sebrae (2003).

### **Productive Chain**

Array of economic activities that are progressively organized from the onset of creating a product (including raw materials, machines and equipment, intermediary products) up to the final product, distribution and commercialization. Source: Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria e Comércio Exterior do Brasil - MDIC (2004).

### **Network**

Networks are organizational systems capable of combining individuals and institutions, in a democratic and participative form, around common objectives and/or themes. In practice, networks are communities, virtually or physically constituted. Source: Rede de Informações para o Terceiro Setor – RITS (2006).

### **Product system**

System characterized by intense and on-going inter-relationships with the environmental context –understood to be the world of nature and the world of global interconnections of a political, economic, social and cultural character. Source: Maurio (1996)

### ***Product-system-service - PSS***

System of products, services, support networks and infrastructure developed to be competitive, fulfilling the needs of users and demonstrating an environmental impact less than that of traditional models of business. Source: International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics – IIIEE (2001).

### **Sociobiodiversity products**

Goods and services (end products, raw materials or benefits) created from biodiversity resources, aimed at the formation of productive chains of interest to traditional peoples and communities, as well as family agriculturists, that promote the maintenance and valorization of their practices and skills, and insure the ensuing rights, creating income and promoting improvement in the quality of life and the environment in which they live. Source: Ministério do Meio Ambiente - MMA (2008)

### **Sustainable Development**

Development that fulfills the needs of the present without comprising the capacity for future generations to meet their own needs. Source: World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

### **Sustainable use**

Use of biologically diverse components in a way and frequency that does not, in the long term, result in the reduction of biological diversity, thus maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of both present and future generations. Source: CDB (1998).

### **Traditional knowledge**

This refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of local communities and indigenous people of the world. It is developed from experience acquired over the centuries and from adaptation to the local culture and environment. Traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It represent a collective heritage, manifested through stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language and agricultural practices, including the

development of varieties of plants and breeds of animals. Source: United Nations Environment Program - UNEP (1999).

### **Traditional knowledge associated to genetic heritage**

Information or individual or collective practice of an indigenous or local community, with both real and potential value, associated with genetic heritage Source: MMA (2000)

### **Value chain**

Array of activities that are developed through the creation and exchange of value. See Value chain analysis and value network.

### **Value chain analysis**

This describes the array of activities required to understand a product or service, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformations and the contribution of various service producers), distribution to final consumers and post-purchase monitoring. This analysis focuses on the dynamics of the interconnections that take place internally in the productive sector, especially the manner in which companies and countries globally integrate. Source: International Development Research Centre (2003).

### **Value Network**

Array of activities that are developed through the creation of value and the exchange of value (exchange of information and knowledge, tangible goods and capital), thus incorporating the system of production and the system of consumption. It involves agents related to the production of resources or raw materials, the transformation, distribution and consumption, use and disposal of products/services, as well as those agents who support the formation and development of the network (research and educational institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations etc.)