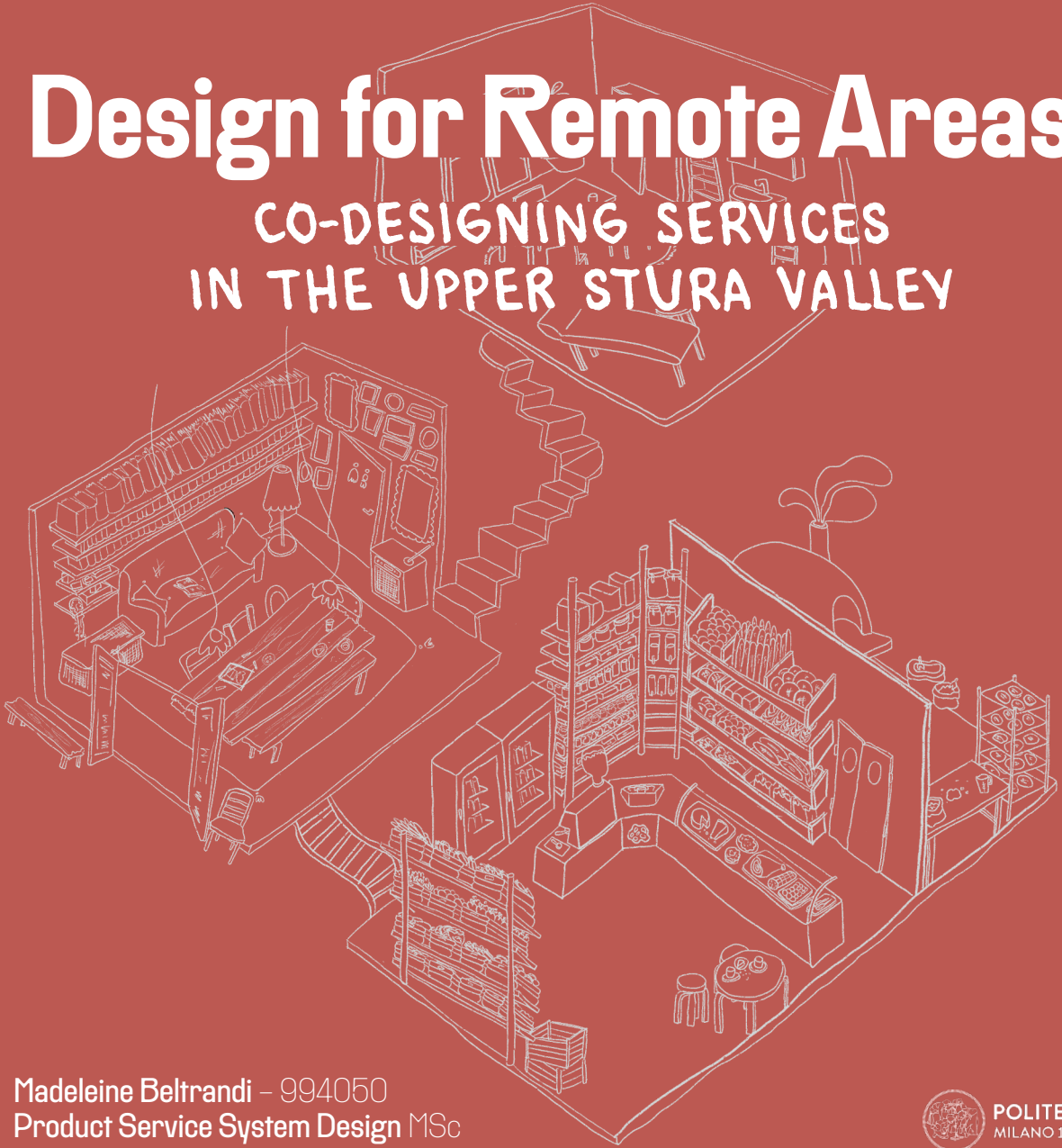


# Design for Remote Areas

## CO-DESIGNING SERVICES IN THE UPPER STURA VALLEY



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Product Service System Design MSc



POLITECNICO  
MILANO 1863

To my Grandfather,  
and the love for his land

*A mio Nonno,  
e l'amore per la sua terra*

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CO-DESIGNING SERVICES  
IN THE UPPER STURA VALLEY

*Design for Remote Areas*

*Co-designing services in the Upper Stura Valley*

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DIPARTIMENTO DI DESIGN**

# Abstract

## ENG

This thesis explores the recent closure of the bakery of Pietraporzio – a village located in the Upper Stura Valley area – as an opportunity to redesign the role of the bakery enhancing its social value within the local community.

More broadly, the research examines the challenges faced daily by Italy's Inner areas: a strong depopulation phenomenon and lack of essential services. The study is proposed as “a reversal of gaze” (De Rossi, 2018) on these areas too often seen as fragile and socio-economically marginalized, yet potentially the site of a great process of change and enhancement of the resources these territories offer.

Accordingly, using typical design methodologies such as Service Design and Participatory Design, the eventual interactions present in the new bakery were planned, considering both spatial (the physical layout of the store) and temporal dimensions (when and how the space is used).

In addition, the research delves into the social and symbolic meaning of bread-making, drawing parallels between its process and the development stages of the project itself. The study

proceeds from the initial research to the detailed description of the service system developed for the Bakery, divided into the three main phases: Ingredients/Basic Knowledge, Dough/Ideation and Leavening/Development.

Furthermore, through participatory design, the thesis advocates for a holistic approach to understanding and improving the well-being of communities in remote areas. Thus, this thesis proposal is “La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery,” a multipurpose center offering diverse but complementary essential services to village life. In addition to serving as a point of sale for basic goods, it assumes a relevant role as a cultural and social hub, inviting residents and tourists to share social moments and engage in active community building.

Finally, this thesis aims to set the grounds for a broader social and territorial regeneration, creating a fertile and welcoming environment that can address depopulation.

## ITA

Questa tesi esplora la recente chiusura della Panetteria di Pietraporzio – paese situato nel territorio dell'Alta Valle Stura di Demonte – come opportunità per riprogettare il ruolo della panetteria valorizzando il suo significato sociale all'interno della comunità locale.

La ricerca, più in generale, esamina le sfide affrontate quotidianamente dalle aree marginali Italiane: un forte fenomeno di spopolamento e mancanza di servizi essenziali. La ricerca si propone come “un'inversione di sguardo” (De Rossi, 2018) su queste aree troppo spesso viste come fragili e socio-economicamente marginalizzate, ma che potrebbero essere il luogo di un grande processo di cambiamento e di valorizzazione delle risorse che questi territori offrono.

Di conseguenza, utilizzando metodologie tipiche del design come il Service Design e il Design Partecipativo, sono state pianificate le possibili interazioni presenti nel nuovo panificio, considerando sia la dimensione spaziale (la disposizione fisica del negozio) sia quella temporale (quando e come viene utilizzato lo spazio).

La ricerca, inoltre, approfondisce il significato sociale e simbolico

della panificazione, tracciando un parallelo tra il suo processo e le fasi di sviluppo del progetto stesso. Lo studio procede dalla ricerca iniziale alla descrizione dettagliata del sistema di servizi sviluppata per la Panetteria, diviso in tre fasi principali: Ingredienti/Conoscenza di base, Impasto/Ideazione e Lievitazione/Sviluppo.

Inoltre, attraverso la progettazione partecipata, la tesi sostiene un approccio olistico per comprendere e migliorare il benessere delle comunità nelle aree remote. La proposta di questa tesi è quindi “La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery”, un centro polifunzionale che offre servizi essenziali diversi ma complementari alla vita del paese. Oltre a servire come punto vendita di beni di prima necessità, assume un ruolo rilevante come polo culturale e sociale, invitando residenti e turisti a condividere momenti di socialità e a impegnarsi nella costruzione attiva della comunità.

Infine, questa tesi intende porre le basi per una più ampia rigenerazione sociale e territoriale, creando un ambiente fertile e accogliente che possa affrontare lo spopolamento.

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# Introduction

## ENG

During the summer of 2023, an event marked the daily life of the Upper Stura Valley community: the sudden closure of the Pietraporzio Bakery, one of the last remaining essential commerce in the upper valley's territory.

This event, in addition to a raising wave of concern among the local community, caught my attention and interest both as a citizen of the area and as a service designer.

Specifically from the designer's perspective, it represented an opportunity to rethink and redesign the bakery space in a way that could become a valuable resource for the community itself. Through the implementation of Service Design—a methodology targeted to plan and organise relationships between people and infrastructure (Sangiorgi and Prendiville, 2017)—it was possible to design the possible interactions of the new bakery system,

considering both the spatial and temporal dimensions.

From the citizen's perspective, on the other hand, emerged the responsibility to find an alternative to the current situation. A personal challenge, driven by needs, desires and the goal of creating a new narrative aimed at generating positive social, institutional, environmental and economic change that can give a possible future to this area. In other words, the need to act as a “change agent” (Fuad-luke, 2009).

Pietraporzio is one of three municipalities in the area considered peripheral according to the National Strategy for Inner Areas (Snai). From this point, a broader problem emerges, which generally affects Italian peripheral and “on the edge” (De Rossi, 2018) areas. Characterised by a drastic territorial division, Inner

Italy is affected by severe phenomena of depopulation, lack of essential services such as health and education, problems of mobility, a growing technological gap, and the absence of effective policies for the regeneration of these territories. This situation of indifference to these territories, common in both public opinion and policies, emphasise the need to reconsider our perspective on those areas (Leonetti, 2022). With a “reversal of gaze,” as suggested by Antonio De Rossi in the collective work of *Riabitare l'Italia* (2018), these areas historically described as fragile and opposed to cities –symbols of dynamism and innovation– could be the site of a great process of change and enhancement of the resources these territories offer.

**“CONSIDERING DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS, MODERNIZATION PROCESSES, ENVIRONMENTAL BALANCES, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL MOBILITY, CONTRADICTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES, FOR ONCE BACKWARDS. STARTING FROM THE CONSIDERATION THAT THE ITALY OF THE MARGIN IS NOT A RESIDUAL PART; THAT IT IS, ON THE CONTRARY, THE PERHAPS DECISIVE TERRAIN FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE COMING DECADES.”**

*[De Rossi, 2018]*

The recent closure of Pietraporzio's bakery highlighted the vital importance of small businesses such as bakeries, especially in marginal territories, where they often serve as the only grocery store in the area. Moreover, the bakery, defined as an urban common, is a service that plays a vital role in sustaining the daily lives of members of a community (Meroni and Selloni, 2023). Precisely on the basis of the definition of common good, in the course of this thesis, it will be seen how traditionally the bakery is not only a place of production of bread and baked goods, but represents a real point of social aggregation, a place where relationships are woven, news are exchanged and moments of daily life are shared. It will also be emphasised that the presence of shared public spaces is fundamental in a village as it allows interactions between people, generating well-being and cohesion within a community. Thus, allowing people to be, not mere consumers, but active citizens (Moro, 2013).

On this same subject, the research explores how the social value attributed to a group of people can often emerge and crystallise into creative and effective solutions for achieving a better way

of life, laying the groundwork for meaningful social innovations. Manzini and Jégou (2008), point out that because of the enormous social and environmental adversities we are exposed to on a daily basis, individual interests tend to converge with social and environmental ones. In this sense, a new concept of well-being is generated, one that is more sustainable and based on the idea of common good. Which leads to an attitude of care, collaborative actions, new forms of community and the new ideas of locality. (Manzini and Jégou, 2008)

Reflecting on these themes, I therefore explored the social and symbolic meaning of bread and bakeries in line with that of social innovations, transforming it from a simple food to a vehicle of values and community driver.



Service design is a multidisciplinary practice that requires collaboration among different skills and is a process composed of precise stages: from research to development and service implementation (Foglieni et Al., 2018). Inspired by a metaphoric connection between Service design and Bread-making, I chose to adopt its different stages as a connecting thread in the development of the potential solution for Pietraporzio's Bakery, its territory, and its community.

Based on this speculation, the following research is divided into 3 main stages of research and development:



#### INGREDIENTS/ BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The section lays the groundwork for the project by exploring key themes through initial desk research on remote areas, followed by field research in the Stura Valley. It concludes with an in-depth examination of the project's methodologies, emphasizing the designer's role in territorial regeneration, setting the stage for the ideation phase.



#### DOUGH/IDEATION

In the second phase, core project values and case studies are analyzed to develop a preliminary concept, which is then refined through co-design sessions with valley residents, tourists, and administrators, ensuring the bakery model aligns with local needs.



#### LEAVENING/DEVELOPMENT

In the last stage, detailed descriptions are provided for the bakery's ultimate service system, covering its user engagement, features, and the services offered.

Finally, I identified the baking stage known as the "Biga" as a symbol of community growth and maturation, which is essential for the regeneration of the area. This gave birth to the project "La Biga - The Upper Valley Bakery," which aims to be the starter of this process of social and territorial regeneration.

Through typical design methodologies, such as service design, co-design, and place-making, I aimed to create a multifunctional space that serves as a community center, supporting the local economy and improving community well-being. During the course of the project's ideation, a series of co-design workshops were held with residents, tourists and administrative representatives to collect data and design a space that would meet the needs of the local community as much as possible. The co-design approach—in addition of being a fundamental resource for the development of these type of goods and spaces—is an agent of a radical transformation of both the physical space and the way these places are experienced (Meroni and Selloni, 2023). Thus, it reflects my belief that design can be a powerful tool for territorial and community regeneration. Furthermore, in the

course of the research, it will be examined how the discipline of place-making is able to reveal the relationship between a space and its inhabitants, consequently generating an idea of well-being. And how participatory design, by enabling people to be actively involved in decision-making and to create a space that reflects their needs and aspirations, can be a powerful tool for understanding that relationship.

Indeed, quoting researcher Valeria Giulia Sonzogno (2021):

**“WHO KNOWS BETTER THESE AREAS, THEIR DIFFICULTIES AND POSSIBILITIES THAN THOSE WHO INHABIT THEM?”**



## ITA

Durante l'estate del 2023, un evento ha segnato la vita quotidiana della comunità dell'Altra Valle Stura: la chiusura improvvisa della Panetteria di Pietraporzio, uno degli ultimi commerci essenziali presenti sul territorio della valle.

Questo evento, oltre a sollevare un'ondata di preoccupazione tra la comunità locale, ha suscitato la mia attenzione ed interesse sia in quanto cittadina di questo territorio sia in quanto progettista di servizi.

Nello specifico, dal punto di vista del progettista, ha rappresentato un'opportunità per ripensare e riprogettare lo spazio del panificio in un modo che potesse diventare una risorsa per la comunità stessa. Tramite l'implemento del Service Design –metodologia in grado di pianificare e organizzare le relazioni che si creano fra le persone e le infrastrutture (Sangiorgi e Prendiville, 2017)– è stato possibile pianificare le possibili interazioni del nuovo panificio, considerando sia la dimensione spaziale sia quella temporale.

Dal punto di vista del cittadino è nata, invece, la responsabilità di trovare un'alternativa al modello attuale. Una sfida personale, spinta da bisogni, desideri e l'obiettivo di creare una contro-narrazione volta a generare un cambiamento sociale, istituzionale, ambientale e economico positivo, in grado di dare un possibile futuro a questo territorio. In altre parole, la necessità di agire come "agente di cambiamento". (Fuad-luke, 2009)

Pietraporzio è uno dei tre comuni dell'area considerati periferici secondo la Strategia nazionale per le aree interne (Shai). Da questo punto emerge un problema più ampio che affligge l'Italia più in generale e in particolare quelle zone periferiche e "al margine" (De Rossi, 2018). Caratterizzata da una forte divisione territoriale, l'Italia interna, è colpita da forti fenomeni di spopolamento, mancanza di servizi essenziali come sanità ed educazione, problemi di accessibilità e mobilità in continuo peggioramento, un divario tecnologico crescente, l'assenza di politiche efficaci per la rigenerazione e l'innovazione di questi territori. Questa situazione di indifferenza verso questi territori, comune sia nell'opinione pubblica che nelle politiche, sottolinea la necessità di rivedere la nostra prospettiva su queste zone (Leonetti, 2022). Con un "inversione di sguardo", come suggerito da Antonio De Rossi in *Riabitare l'Italia* (2018), queste zone storicamente descritte come fragili e in contrapposizione alle città –simboli di dinamismo e innovazione– potrebbero essere luogo di un grande processo di cambiamento e valorizzazione delle risorse che questi territori offrono.

**“CONSIDERARE LE DINAMICHE DEMOGRAFICHE, I PROCESSI DI MODERNIZZAZIONE, GLI EQUILIBRI AMBIENTALI, LE MOBILITÀ SOCIALI E TERRITORIALI, LE CONTRADDIZIONI E LE OPPORTUNITÀ, PER UNA VOLTA ALL'INCONTRARIO. PARTENDO DALLA CONSIDERAZIONE CHE L'ITALIA DEL MARGINE NON È UNA PARTE RESIDUALE; CHE SI TRATTA ANZI DEL TERRENO FORSE DECISIVO PER VINCERE LE SFIDE DEI PROSSIMI DECENNI.”**

(De Rossi, 2018)

La recente chiusura della Panetteria di Pietraporzio, ha messo in luce l'importanza vitale delle piccole attività, come le panetterie, nelle comunità, specialmente in questi territori marginali, dove spesso rappresentano l'unico negozio di alimentari presente sul territorio. Inoltre, il panificio, definito come bene comune urbano, è un servizio che svolge un ruolo vitale nel sostenere la vita quotidiana dei membri di una comunità (Meroni and Selloni, 2023). Proprio sulla base della definizione di bene comune, nel corso di questa tesi, si vedrà come tradizionalmente il panificio non è solo un luogo di produzione di pane e prodotti da forno, ma rappresenta un vero e proprio punto di aggregazione sociale, un luogo dove si intrecciano relazioni, si scambiano notizie e si condividono momenti di vita quotidiana. Verrà, inoltre, sottolineato come la presenza di spazi pubblici condivisi sia fondamentale in un centro abitato poiché permette le interazioni tra le persone, generando benessere e coesione all'interno di una comunità. E permettendo alle persone di essere cittadini quotidiani (Barbera, 2023), non semplici consumatori ma cittadini attivi (Moro, 2013).

Su questo stesso tema, la ricerca esplora come il valore sociale attribuito ad un gruppo di persone possa spesso emergere e cristallizzarsi in soluzioni creative ed efficaci per l'ottenimento di uno stile di vita migliore, ponendo le basi per innovazioni sociali significative. Ezio Manzini e François Jégou (2008), sottolineano come, a causa delle enormi avversità sociali ed ambientali a cui siamo sottoposti quotidianamente, le persone siano portate ad atteggiarsi come progettisti, e dunque, a ripensare e ricostruire ogni giorno la propria vita. In questo senso, gli interessi individuali convergono con quelli sociali e ambientali, ma soprattutto si genera un nuovo concetto di benessere, più sostenibile e basato sull'idea di "bene

comune". Che porta ad un'atteggiamento di cura, di azioni collaborative, di nuove forme di comunità e le nuove idee di località (Manzini e Jégou, 2008).

Riflettendo su questi temi, ho dunque esplorato il significato sociale e simbolico del pane e delle panetterie, in linea con quello delle innovazioni sociali, trasformandolo da semplice alimento a veicolo di valori e comunità.

La progettazione dei servizi è una pratica multidisciplinare che richiede la collaborazione tra diverse competenze e un processo composto da fasi precise: dalla ricerca allo sviluppo, fino all'implementazione del servizio (F. Foglieni et Al, 2018). Così come la panificazione è un processo composto dall'unione di ingredienti diversi ed una serie di azioni precise. Ispirata da una connessione metaforica tra il Service design e la panificazione, ho scelto di adottare le sue diverse fasi come filo conduttore nello sviluppo della potenziale soluzione per il panificio di Pietraporzio, il suo territorio e la sua comunità.

Sulla base di questa speculazione, la seguente ricerca si suddivide in 3 fasi principali di ricerca e sviluppo:



### INGREDIENTI/CONOSCENZE DI BASE

La sezione pone le basi per il progetto, esplorando i temi chiave attraverso una prima ricerca accademica sulle aree periferiche, seguita da una ricerca sul campo in Valle Stura. Si conclude con un approfondimento sulle metodologie del progetto, sottolineando il ruolo del designer nella rigenerazione del territorio e ponendo le basi per la fase ideativa.



### L'IMPASTO/IDEAZIONE

Nella seconda fase, i valori fondamentali del progetto e i casi di studio sono stati analizzati per sviluppare un concetto preliminare, che è stato poi perfezionato attraverso sessioni di co-progettazione con i residenti della valle, i turisti e gli amministratori, assicurando che il modello della panetteria sia in linea con le esigenze locali.



### LIEVITAZIONE/SVILUPPO

Nell'ultima fase, vengono fornite descrizioni dettagliate del sistema definitivo di servizi del panificio, includendo il coinvolgimento degli utenti, le caratteristiche e i servizi offerti.

Infine, ho identificato nella fase della panificazione nota come "Biga" un simbolo di crescita e maturazione comunitaria, essenziale per la rigenerazione del territorio. Questo ha dato vita al progetto "La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery", che mira a essere il lievito per avviare questo processo di rigenerazione sociale e territoriale.

Attraverso metodologie tipiche del design, quali il service design, il co-design e il place-making, ho inteso creare uno spazio multifunzionale che funga da centro comunitario, sostenendo l'economia locale e migliorando il benessere della comunità. Durante l'ideazione del progetto sono stati organizzati una serie di workshop di co-design con residenti, turisti e rappresentanti amministrativi per raccogliere dati e progettare uno spazio che rispondesse il più possibile alle esigenze della comunità locale. Questo approccio, oltre a rappresentare una risorsa fondamentale per la progettazione di questo tipo di beni e spazi, in quanto agente di una trasformazione radicale sia dello spazio fisico che del modo in cui questi luoghi vengono vissuti (Meroni and Selloni, 2023), riflette la mia convinzione che il design possa essere un potente strumento per la rigenerazione territoriale e comunitaria. Nel corso della ricerca, verrà esaminato come la disciplina del place-making sia in grado di rivelare la relazione che si instaura tra uno spazio e i suoi abitanti, generando di conseguenza un'idea di benessere. E di come il design partecipativo, consentendo alle persone di essere attivamente coinvolte nel processo decisionale e di creare uno spazio che rispecchi le loro esigenze e aspirazioni, possa essere un potente strumento per comprendere tale relazione. Perché, citando la ricercatrice Valeria Giulia Sonzognò (2021):

**“CHI CONOSCE MEGLIO QUESTE AREE, LE DIFFICOLTÀ E LE POSSIBILITÀ DI CHI LE ABITA?”**



# INGREDIENTS

## BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The design approach starts with the investigation of background knowledge to shape the entire creation process. This step will ensure the quality and relevance of the final result. Since this project focuses on a specific territory, thorough analysis of the territorial context is essential. Adopting an action-research model involves exploring the territory both in the field and academically.

Therefore, in this section are explored key themes to lay the foundation for the project's development. Beginning with desk research on rural areas in Italy's inland regions, followed by field research on the Stura Valley, and concluding with in-depth research on methodologies used in the project, particularly focusing on the designer's role in territorial regeneration.

### 1. INNER AREAS

### 2. THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT: THE STURA VALLEY

### 3. POSSIBLE DESIGN CONTRIBUTIONS



01.

# INNER AREAS



## Introduction

“[THE COUNTRYSIDE] IT IS THE FOREFRONT OF MODERNISATION, SOMETHING WE THOUGHT THE CITY WAS. THE COUNTRYSIDE IS STILL THE PLACE WHERE NEW IDEAS AND EXPERIMENTATIONS ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE.”

[SAMIR BANTAL, 2020]

In the words of Samir Bantal, architect of OMA, “the countryside is still the place where new ideas and experiments are realized.” So begins the first chapter, with the sentiment resonating in the overall theme of not only this chapter, but the entire research: the exploration of Inner Areas. As urbanization continues to dominate discussions of development and progress, it becomes rather more crucial to shift our attention to rural areas, where significant transformations are taking place.

This chapter seeks to explore the dichotomy between rural and urban environments, with a specific focus on Italy as the contextual area of research. The Italian landscape, characterized by a mixture of urban and rural territories, and a complex geography presents a concrete example of the challenges and opportunities that characterize Rural Areas.

Moreover, an examination of Italy’s Inner Areas reveals a complex interaction between socio-economic factors, environmental resources and cultural heritage. Defined by the Snai policy as regions significantly distant from essential service centers but rich in environmental and cultural resources, the Inner Areas represent much potential for regeneration and development. Subsequently, the chapter discusses how the phenomenon of rural depopulation is one of the rather significant challenges, involving the decline of essential services, lack of economic opportunities and an aging population. However, in the midst of these challenges, there is a resilience and determination of local communities to revitalize their areas. Finally, the chapter focuses on a particular category of rural areas, which are the Mountain areas. Areas considered marginal and disadvantaged by definition due to their topography.

Fig. 00 A mountain valley. Illustration by the author.



# Urban vs Rural



Samir Bantal, architect at OMA, introduces as such the driving force behind “Countryside: the Future,” the exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2020, together with architect Rem Koolhaas. The goal of the exhibition, Koolhaas explains, is to shift the gaze, too focused on urban centers, to what is happening in rural areas.

As a matter of fact, the United Nations through the report ‘World Urbanization Prospects’ published in 2014 drew collective attention to the phenomenon of urbanization. The star architect’s theory is that while the spotlight is on cities, the countryside is undergoing a major transformation. Which is worth observing. Just as the exhibition presents itself as a collection of “new and old practices to rediscover dynamics of the countryside” (Bental, 2020), the following pages will discuss the situation of rural areas

in relation to urban ones, with an emphasis on the Italian ones being the context area of the research conducted in this study.

According to the UN report (Ibid.), 99% of the earth’s surface is rural, remote and wild land, and only about 1% of the global territory is defined as built-up area. Yet in the future, only 19% of the population will live in rural areas (UN, 2018). Indeed, today more than 4.3 billion people live in cities. For most of human history, most people in the world have lived in small communities. In recent centuries, and especially in recent decades, the situation has changed dramatically. There has been a mass migration of populations from rural to urban areas. These data show us how nowadays we live in ways that are unsustainable, both for our own well-being and for that of the planet we live on.

On the same time, how necessary it is to regenerate these areas, and enable everyone to live a quality life in the future. It is a huge and perhaps impossible challenge for rural areas to compete with urban areas. To remain attractive, maintain economic sustainability and promote vibrant communities has become an increasingly distant vision for small rural localities to achieve. Nevertheless, this remains a crucial objective.

One of the major problems related to these realities is the phenomenon of depopulation, which leads to a gap between the demand and supply of services, a lack of labour and the loss of attractiveness of the area itself (ESPON, 2017). The macro-trend of urbanisation shows how crucial it is for rural areas to reinvent themselves in order to remain competitive and to tackle this phenomenon.

Fig. 01 The exhibition “Countryside, The Future” curated by Rem Koolhaas and Samir Bantal at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY

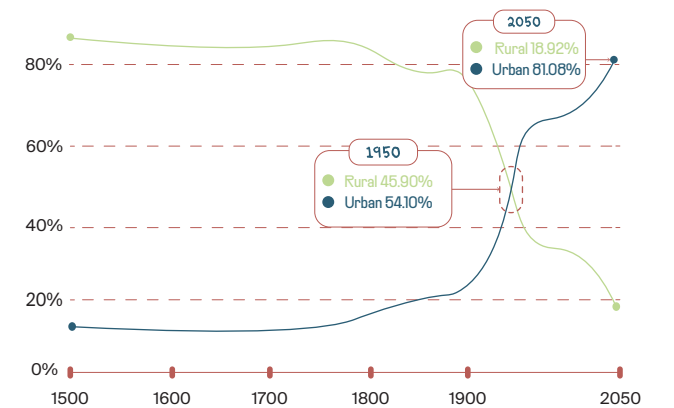


Fig.02 Rural-Urban population data in 1950 and 2050. Source: OIWD based on UN World Urbanization Prospects (2018) & Historical OurWorldInData.org/urbanization - Design by the author



**THE IMPORTANCE IN REGENERATING RURAL AREAS**

According to the European Commission, there are three possible strategies to deal with depopulation in rural areas: to do nothing, to try to reverse the trend and 'go for growth' (although unthinkable nowadays) or to accept the decline and work on more provocative and holistic regeneration strategies (ESPON, 2017). In summary, we could simplify these approaches into a more conservative one and a radical one, aimed at accepting the current situation and mediating it. However, traditional strategies tend to more commonly choose the path of growth, and thus the conservative one, rather than that of adaptation through innovative solutions. This is not surprising, since these regions are often characterised by more conservative structures and led by local administrations resistant to change.

The issue of innovation in remote areas is central to the development of these territories in terms of possible economic growth, population density and environmental protection. For this reason, regeneration and cohesion policies are on the agenda for the European Union, which has a series of projects and tools focusing on rural areas. To name a few: Interreg, Smart Villages, Smoties,...

Moreover, the big stake for policy-makers, is (and must be) to be able to find people capable of supporting and creating new businesses, and guaranteeing access to quality and necessary services. (Interreg, 2019)

The phenomenon of shrinkage (ESPON, 2017) must be seen under a positive lens and, above all, must be accepted; only in this way it will be possible to build more innovative, holistic and place-based strategies for the development of these territories with the contribution of local administrations and local actors.



# The context of Italian Inner Areas

**DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTIC**

The Italian territory is the result of a mixture of urban and rural, mountainous and marine territories, and this geography is what represents the true face of the Italian landscape and it represents the daily lives of millions of people who have to face these hybrid territories every day (Barbera and De Rossi, 2021).

Italy, again, is a country characterized by a poly-centrism of municipalities. Those networks of municipalities are defined as 'service supply centres' (Department for Development and Economic Cohesion), surrounded by satellite municipalities distinguished by different levels of remoteness. These territories, whose main characteristic is that they have a reduced supply of essential services, are defined following the stipulation of the National Strategy of Inner Areas, as "Inner Areas."

**“AREAS SIGNIFICANTLY DISTANT FROM THE CENTRES OF SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES (OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND MOBILITY), RICH IN IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND STRONGLY DIVERSIFIED BY NATURE AND AS A RESULT OF SECULAR PROCESSES OF ANTHROPISTATION”**

*(SMAI, 2013)*



Inner areas are classified according to the presence (or lack) of three joint types of services: health, education and mobility. The municipalities with these three services are defined as Poles or Inter-municipal Poles and the remaining municipalities are classified according to their distance to essential services measured in travel time. The final mapping, provides 4 bands:

- Belt
- Intermediate
- Peripheral
- Ultra-peripheral

According to the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion, the definition of inner areas, is not to be seen as a sign of handicap or weakness, although these territories are disadvantaged on a socio-economic level, the advice is to extrapolate the values related to these territories. Indeed, it is a matter of outlining the strengths for the protection and enhancement of the environment, as well as for the preservation of customs and traditions linked to the local community.

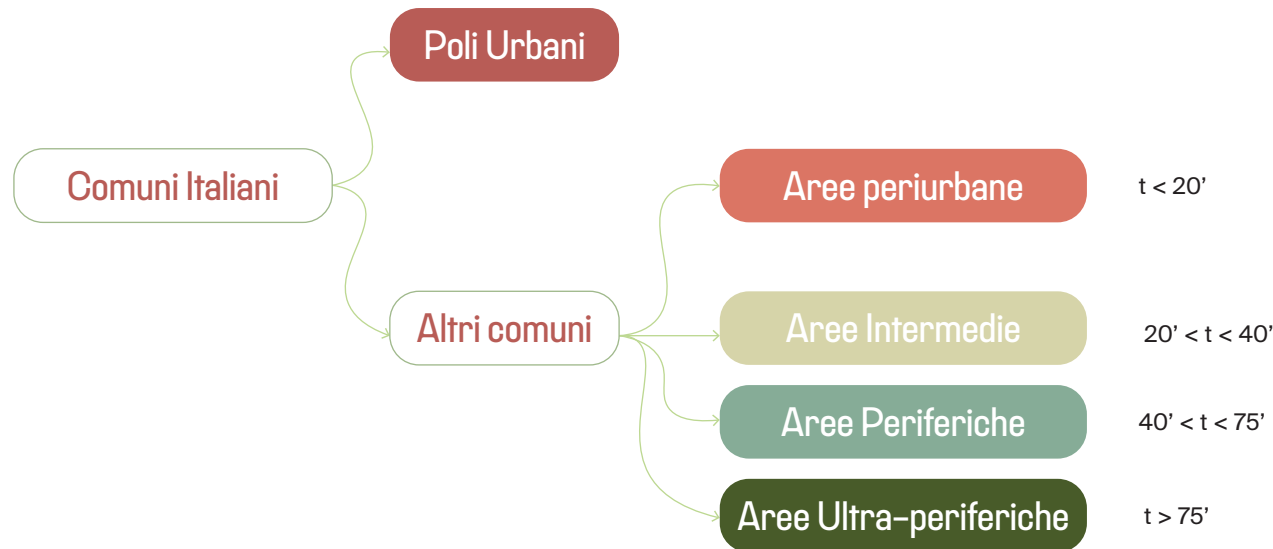


Fig. 03 Inner Areas classification. Source: Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica, (2021). Design by the author



### PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE INNER ITALY

The Italian population living in a marginal area amounts to a quarter of the total population, as well as more than 2/3 of the Italian territory as a whole. However, “[Giving back] a snapshot of inland Italy is a very complex operation indeed” (De Rossi, 2018), since it’s a very dynamic phenomena.

To date, in Italy, only 241 municipalities are considered Poles or Intermunicipal Poles and therefore present the totality of essential services. On the other hand, 48.4% are municipalities located at relatively small distances, constituting what are referred to as Belt areas. (Istat, 2022)

The remaining 48.5% (3,834 Italian municipalities) are instead considered as the Internal Areas of the Country, of which 24.4% Intermediate Municipalities, 19.3% Peripheral Municipalities, and 4.8% Ultraperipheral Municipalities (Istat, 2022). These data show us that just under half of Italy’s territory is made up of rural areas and therefore lacks the supply of those services that are considered essential.

One of the main concerns associated with these areas is the loss of population, notably in the younger age groups, leading to a consequent aging of the population. Between 2002 and 2020, inner areas saw a depopulation of -1.4%, which is expected to grow by a further 2.2% by 2030 (Istat, 2022).

Italy’s rural areas are highly critical and regressive territories, where the elderly population far outnumbers the young (24.5% of the population of inland areas is represented by the over64s). This marks the lack of generational change, which will lead to the progressive total abandonment of these areas and their decline.

### ACTIVE POPULATION AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

In the documentary “Visages, Villages” (2017) director Agnes Varda and photographer JR expose the close relationship between people and land, and consequently the relevance of people in the development of a place. This same strength, or relationship, is commonly referred to in the policy-making field as a “place-sensitive/place-based” approach. However, we will see in Chapter 3 how this relationship is fundamental and promising in the development of regeneration strategies.



Fig. 04 frame from the movie “Visages, Villages”. Varda, A., & JR. (Directors). (2017).



In the daily narrative about rural areas, a predominantly pessimistic one, we forget to talk about perhaps the most important thing: the people who have decided to stay and invest in these territories. It is important to emphasize that these people have decided to stay not by obligation, but by will: thus an active and conscious staying (Sonzogno, 2022).

Regarding that subject, the association Riabitare l'Italia, in 2021, conducted a research project on the life prospects of young Italian inhabitants in inland areas. The result obtained was a shift of gaze on these territories and their inhabitants (Sonzogno, 2022), commonly perceived as marginal, depopulated and prospectless places. They were this time described as welcoming places capable of offering a simple lifestyle, in contact with nature and the local community. These voices are conscious heads of the difficulties of these areas and the challenges in them: complex bureaucracies, weak vision, lack of communication and the comparison with those already working in the area.

To sum up, 67 % of the interviewees stated that they would like to stay in their hometown and build their future there. However, for 80% of them, the greatest risk they feel exposed to is the economic dimension, characterized by high unemployment, job insecurity and low pay, especially for women.

Another glimpse into the youth landscape in Italy can be found in the documentary "Futura" directed by directors Pietro Marcello, Francesco Munzi, and Alice Rohrwacher at the turn of the 2019-2020 year. Compared to the mathematical and rational vision extrapolated from the Giovani Dentro program's research presented above, the picture we draw from this documentary is an emotional journey among the concerns and hopes that the current generations have for the future. A future increasingly dictated by social, economic, political and environmental uncertainties and crises. Nevertheless, the film offers us a sincere and genuine insight into expectations for a positive future.

Ultimately, these data and stories, show us how the phenomena of depopulation and population aging are fundamental issues and that only by addressing them can we achieve sustainable development and reduce territorial inequalities (Sonzogno, 2022). Most importantly, they highlight, how the common narrative is mistaken and how important it is to start looking at these territories as new possibilities and their true potential.



Fig. 05 frame from the documentary "Futura". Munzi, F., Rohrwacher, A., & Marcello, P. (Directors). (2021)

- Area Urbane
- Agricoltura Intensiva
- Area Intermedia
- Area Intermedia con vincoli naturali
- Area Periferiche con problemi di sviluppo

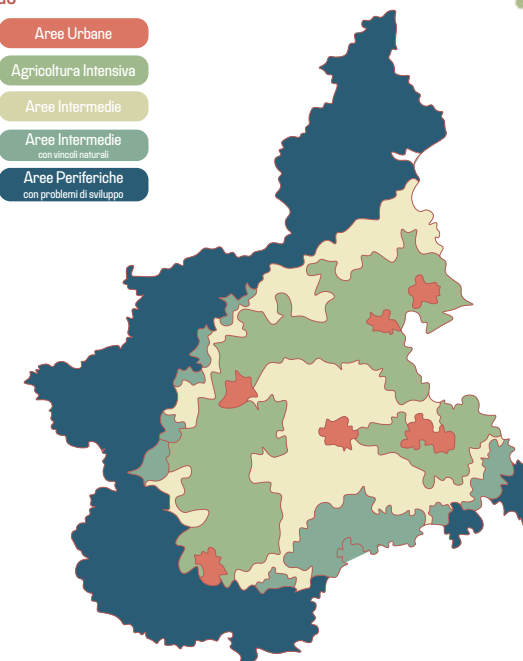


Fig.06 Piedmont rural area classification Source: Ires Piemonte, 2022 Design by the author

THE (DIS)SERVICES OF INNER AREAS

That being said, beyond the personal motivations and ambitions that may bond a person to a place, there are certain services that are particularly relevant to the well-being and development of a community. Services that are often lacking in these areas defined as, precisely, marginal. Listed below are some findings regarding outreach services located in the inland areas of Piedmont, as this is the region of interest in the current research.

Firstly, a significant initial statistic concerns the population of the Piedmont region, Italy's second largest region and fourth most populated (Istat 2019), 70 % of which live in areas considered rural. Among whom a large proportion live in "rural areas with development problems" (Ires Piemonte, 2022), such as mountain areas. Piedmont's rural population is affected by a major crisis, especially in mountainous areas where a slow process of unification

of municipalities has been taking place for years (Ires Piemonte, 2022). This significant decline in population could only lead to a consequent shutdown of essential services in marginal areas.

Between 2014 and 2020 (years of action of the National Strategy for Inner Areas), the number of general commercial establishments, i.e., mini-markets, emporiums, and all those generalist businesses that often represent the only store in a village, decreased of 19%. This figure is particularly alarming in smaller municipalities, where the collapse of these stores marks the closing of the only convenience store present. Going from 204 municipalities deprived in 2014 to 265 in 2020 (83 of which are located in mountain areas), a growing data due to the covid pandemic 19 by which many of these small shopkeepers could not survive.





Consequently, today the population left without these services amounts to 159,440 inhabitants.

These data are reconfirmed for specialised food establishments (which include stores such as butcher shops, bakeries, dairies, etc.), with 56 businesses closing in the same time frame. Again, mountain municipalities were the hardest hit, with an amount of 149 municipalities lacking this supply (Ires Piemonte, 2022).

On the other hand, a positive trend can be found in drug resale services, with an increase of 1.8 percent of which 2.3 percent was in mountain areas. The fastest-growing category is parapharmacies, thanks to a number of liberalisation decrees that have expanded the medicines on sale.

Finally, the most resounding and worrying fact is to see that 11 municipalities are considered desertified, meaning completely deprived of services. Of which 7, are located in mountainous areas. However, it is important to recall that these data stop at 2020.

**-19%** OF COMMERCIAL EXERCISES IN INNER AREAS

**168** MUNICIPALITIES WITHOUT RETAIL BUSINESSES

**56** FOOD AND GROCERY STORES CLOSED

## 11 MUNICIPALITIES CONSIDERED TO BE COMPLETELY DESERTIFIED

Source: Ires Piemonte, 2022

### DEVELOPMENT IN THE INNER AREAS

These facts prove how crucial it is, in Italy, to invest in the development of these territories and to favour place-based approaches aimed at the direct involvement of local actors, such as residents, institutions, administrations, etc. Some of the strategies to be implemented are the protection of the territory, the safeguarding of 'know-how', limiting social costs, etc., the ultimate goal of which is to 'create internal development capable of taking root and lasting over time, limiting depopulation and encouraging young people to return to these territories' (Istat, 2022)

Another key factor linked to the positive development of the Inner Areas is the economic and entrepreneurial dimension. Currently, only 13% of the products generated are produced in inner areas, compared to 87% in urban centres. Entrepreneurship in these areas is closely linked to the idea of craftsmanship and local know-how, which is certainly a flagship along with tourism in these territories. However, entrepreneurial activities involve very high production costs, making it even more difficult to develop activities in such regions.



# Mountain areas

## A SPECIAL CASE OF INNER AREAS

Among other things, Italy's inland areas are marked by their often vulnerable geomorphology. In the National Strategy Inner Areas this datum is defined as the "roughness" of the territory, i.e., the altimetry.

Notably, analysis of the geography of inner areas shows that 48.9 percent of municipalities have a predominantly mountainous profile, especially in the Alps, the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines and the larger islands. According to the Snai strategy, as the level of roughness increases, the living conditions of the population become increasingly uncomfortable and complicated.

However, what is not specified by the strategy is a clear distinction between Inner Area and Mountain Area, two realities that are distant both geographically and conceptually (Dematteis, 2014).

While, for the definition of Inner Area, what counts is the peripheral and marginal position with respect to an urban center (cf. Pole), linked to the consequent lack of supply of essential services, for the definition of Mountain, reference is made to certain physical and environmental characteristics of the territory that make it disadvantaged and marked by perennial disability.

**“IF THE SEA, RISING A FEW METERS, COVERED THAT GULF OF LAND THAT IS THE PADANA PLAIN, ITALY WOULD BE ONE GREAT MOUNTAIN.”**

*[Ruini, 1919]*

TRANSLATION BY THE AUTHOR





### MOUNTAIN VS URBAN: A WRONG DICHOTOMY?

This duality is not only found between inland and mountain areas, but more generally between mountains and cities. Indeed, mountains have always been seen in opposition to the city and described as its contrary.

Concerning this matter, Filippo Barbera and Antonio De Rossi, introduce the term “metromontagna” (2021). Metromontagna is a new concept that encapsulates what has always appeared divided in the relationship between metropolis and mountain and de-constructs the meanings of individual city and mountain peripheries.

Mountains are seen nowadays as synonymous with high altitude, tourism and nature at the disposal of the city (De Rossi in Barbera and Rossi, 2021). By breaking this view, the productive values of the mountains are also recognized and no longer solely for consumption. The Mountain is a territory that needs missions closely linked to the surrounding area, needs connections and networks for the functioning of public services, and this can only happen with a territorial continuum between small towns, medium-sized cities, mountains, ... (Lucatelli and Sonzogno, 2021). Thus, it requires strategic planning, based on successful partnerships with public, private, third sector actors from both the city and the mountain, but above all, communities must be involved, which have a key role in the elaboration of certain strategies. An example is the Communauté de Communes implemented in France, which is a public body for inter-municipal cooperation (Dematteis, 2014).

What the mountains still offer the city, in terms of (almost) natural resources, is clearly out of balance with what the city offers the mountains, as the mountains could not live without the city while the city could (Dematteis, 2014). Therefore, a metromontane geography (Dematteis and Corrado, 2021) is necessary, understood as a well-determined network of actions and exchanges between metropolitan and mountain centers. Metromontane geography is based on concrete economic facts such as service flows, natural productive resources, short supply chains, labor, and infrastructure (Dematteis and Corrado, 2021).



Fig. 07 Ponteb Bernardo, hamlet in Pietraporzio  
Photo by the author



# 02.

# THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT



Fig. 02 The Stura Valley  
Illustration by the author

## Introduction

In the following chapter, the territory of the Stura di Demonte Valley is presented, as it represents the marginal territory where the research and the subsequent project related to it is developed. The idea for this thesis stems, among other things, from a series of insights and thoughts that emerged from the recent closure of the bakery in the municipality of Pietraporzio. A village located in the territory of the Upper Stura Valley and considered, according to the Snai, a peripheral and therefore marginal area. Although the Stura Valley does not fall within the project areas selected by the Technical Committee of Inner Areas, targeted for investment by the national strategy, it can still be considered an area with strong problems of depopulation, aging population, and in need of regeneration if a viable future is to be assured. The chapter, consequently, aims to provide a detailed overview of the Stura di Demonte Valley area, highlighting its geological, socio-economic characteristics and describing the history and culture

that characterize its lands. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to show the importance in implementing a regeneration policy and the development of more proximity services to the population. First, the territory of the Stura Valley is introduced in its entirety, to give the reader a broader picture of the context and to frame the area in its socio-cultural context. Next, the chapter proceeds with a focus on the Upper Valley municipalities that are considered peripheral in that they are more than 40 minutes away from the nearest pole. Providing the reader with a rather more comprehensive mapping of the services and situation in these areas, including a retrospective on their past. Finally, this chapter, concludes with a series of interviews that the author calls “small talk” due to their informal nature, which happened along the development of the project, with some of the actors who actively work or live in the territory.



# The Stura Valley

## PRESENTATION

The Stura Valley is a green corridor that stretches about 60 km from the 636 m above sea level of the flat Borgo San Dalmazzo to the 1996 m asl of the Colle della Maddalena (Col de Larche in French). We could refer to the Stura di Demonte Valley as a border valley, in a broad sense. A delimitation not only orographic and altitudinal, between mountains and plains, but also administrative by marking the border with France, with the Valley De L'Ubaye, to the west, across the Colle della Maddalena and the Valle della Tinée, to the southwest, through the Colle della Lombarda.

The valley is, in addition, routed by the Stura River, which marks the division between the Maritime Alps, to the south, and the Cottian Alps, to the north.

It is important to emphasize the "of Demonte" when talking about the Stura Valley, in fact only in Piedmont there are 3 other Stura Valleys: the Stura of Casale Monferrato, the Stura of Novi Ligure and the Stura di Lanzo. However for the sake of simplicity from here on I will refer by the term Stura Valley to the Stura Valley of Demonte (Soldati, 1991, in Zenoni, 2021).

The Stura Valley is spread over three distinct areas, each with its own peculiarities and riches on a geographical, social and economic level. We could define these three areas as: the Confluence, the Lower Valley, and the Upper Valley.

## THE CONFLUENCE

The Stura di Demonte Valley originates in the Gesso and Stura River Park, a green area where the two main rivers of the provincial capital, converge into one. The reserve, green lung of the plain, incorporates municipalities such as Borgo San Dalmazzo, Vignolo and Roccasparvera, creating a true natural bridge between the valley and the surrounding lowlands.

## THE LOWER VALLEY

The valley bottom rises slightly westward, passing through the villages of Gaiola, Moiola until it reaches Demonte. The latter, chief town of the Valley, is its administrative and cultural heart. Known for being the headquarters of the Unione Montana, a public body that among other things deals with the enhancement of the territory in the cultural, social and economic spheres. Also located here is the Caseificio Valle Stura, one of the most important industrial points for the valley's economy.

The territory, characterized by wide green meadows gives green pastures for ovines and bovines during summer, and wide trails for cross-country skiers during winter.



Fig. 09 The Upper Stura Valley of Demonte: il Colle della Maddalena (Cuneo) Photo courtesy of Unione Montana Valle Stura's Archive

## THE HIGH VALLEY

It unveils its breathtaking landscapes and villages rich in history including Vinadio, with its Fort Albertino and the Sanctuary of St. Anne, the highest in Europe. Still a cherished destination for pilgrims from all over Europe. Additionally, the municipality of Vinadio is home to the Acqua Sant'Anna company, the first and important source of economy for the Valley.

With the villages of Sambuco, Pietraporzio and Argentera, we find impressive nature blended with local culture and traditions. These places are important guarantees of ancient folkloric and enogastronomic traditions. Such as the raising of the lamb breed Sambucano, a Slow Food presidium, and the ancient pastoral transhumance called la Rauto in langue d'oc. These customs are jealously narrated within the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia located in the hamlet of Pontebernardo.



### THE MUNICIPALITIES

From the low plain to the higher peaks, the valley is composed of 12 municipalities, each with its own uniqueness and contribution to the richness of the territory. This geographic diversity also translates into a variety of experiences for those who visit the valley, from unspoiled nature to historical and cultural remains. Listed below, in increasing altimetric order, are the municipalities that constitute the Valley: Borgo San Dalmazzo (636m a.s.l.), Roccasparvera (674m a.s.l.), Moidola (689m a.s.l.), Gaiola (692m a.s.l.), Rittana (753m a.s.l.), Valloriate (796m a.s.l.), Demonte (780m a.s.l.), Aisone (834m a.s.l.), Vinadio (904m a.s.l.), Sambuco (1,184m a.s.l.), Pietraporzio (1,246m a.s.l.), Argentera (1,684m a.s.l.).

### INLAND AREA AND SNAI CLASSIFICATION

During the drafting of the National Inner Areas Strategy, the Inner Areas Technical Committee, selects 72 project areas, which include 1077 municipalities considered of higher priority. The areas selected in the Piedmont region included Val Bormida, Val dell'Ossola, Val di Lanzo and Valle Maira e Grana, while Valle Stura does not appear among those selected. Nevertheless, the latter can be classified as an inland area according to the points listed earlier in Chapter 1 and outlined by the Snai: commuting times and availability of essential services. Starting from the lower valley, municipalities in the lower section of the valley from Borgo San Dalmazzo to Moidola are considered

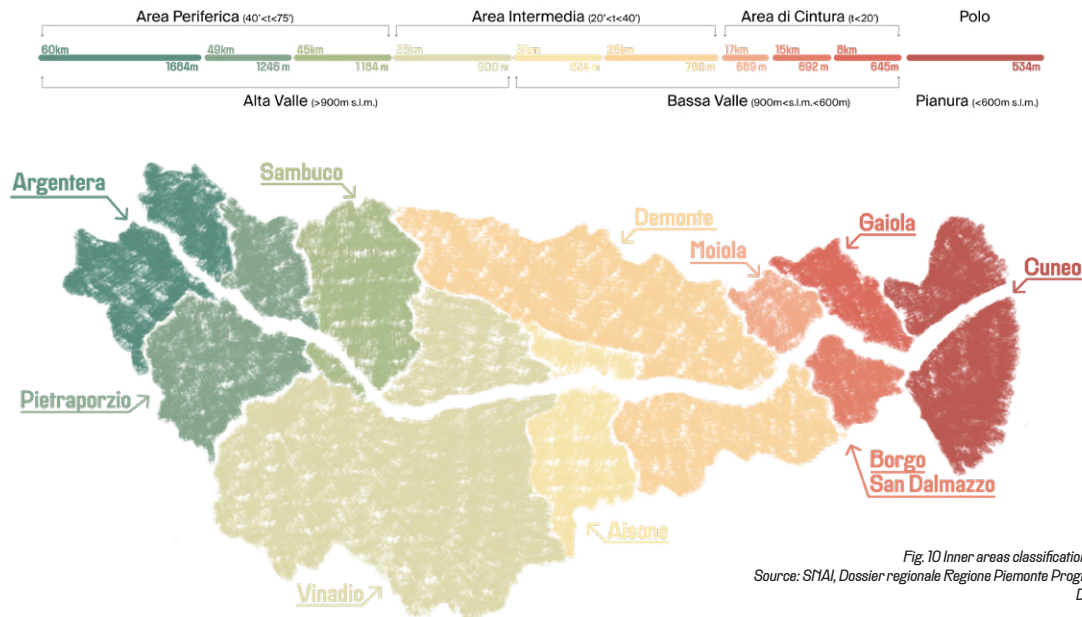


Fig. 10 Inner areas classification of the Stura Valley  
 Source: SHAI, Dossier regionale Regione Piemonte Programma 2021-2027  
 Design by the author



belt areas. The municipalities from Demonte to Vinadio, on the other hand, fall within the Intermediate areas, and finally the municipalities of Sambuco, Pietraporzio, and Argentera are defined as peripheral since they have a travel time between 40 and 75 minutes to reach the nearest hub, which is Cuneo.

Precisely because of their suburban index, these last ones are the study areas of this thesis. Considering this fact, although in the following pages I will attempt to give an overall view of the Valley, its territory and culture, the major focus will be on the three municipalities of the Upper Valley, the in-depth study of the research.

### ECONOMY AND SERVICES

Despite its beauty and resources, the Stura Valley, like many inland areas of Italy, faces the challenge of keeping essential services alive for its inhabitants. The distance from larger urban centers means that there is a gradual decrease in the services available as one rises in altitude. Thus, as mentioned earlier (see Chapter 1), inland areas are classified on the basis of their distance from so-called "service centers." Service centers can be defined as such if they can simultaneously offer the 3 essential services: education, health, and rail service. Specifically, by secondary education is meant a "comprehensive offering," including high schools, technical and professional institutes, and other types of secondary schools. Regarding health service, facilities must include DEA and 1st level facilities.

Finally, railway stations should consist of silver type (medium-small facilities). In the case of the Stura Valley of Demonte, we can find these services in the provincial capital, Cuneo, as well as the nearest pole. In the context of mapping the area, essential services to the resident population in the areas of social health, education, transportation and utilities were identified. Among them are: school services, commercial-food services, restaurant services, cultural and recreational services,...

The final picture that can be drawn is a loss of essential services to the resident population as one goes up in altitude, where the municipality of Vinadio could be said to represent the last contact with most of the proximity services. Moreover, growth in altitude corresponds to a growth in attention to tourism. With a wide range of local restaurant spots, tourist accommodations, and cultural points. However, tourism undoubtedly represents the main economy of the Upper Valley, which is fundamental to fostering local development. Furthermore, always in the Upper Valley, it is where a large number of local businesses are concentrated whose purpose is to promote eno-gastronomic and cultural traditions (see Sambucan Lamb, Soapmaking, Eco-Museo of Shepherding). These data are of great relevance; indeed, according to the National Strategy of Inland Areas, it is precisely those territories with great environmental and cultural value and that seek to keep alive traditional customs and traditions that have a greater

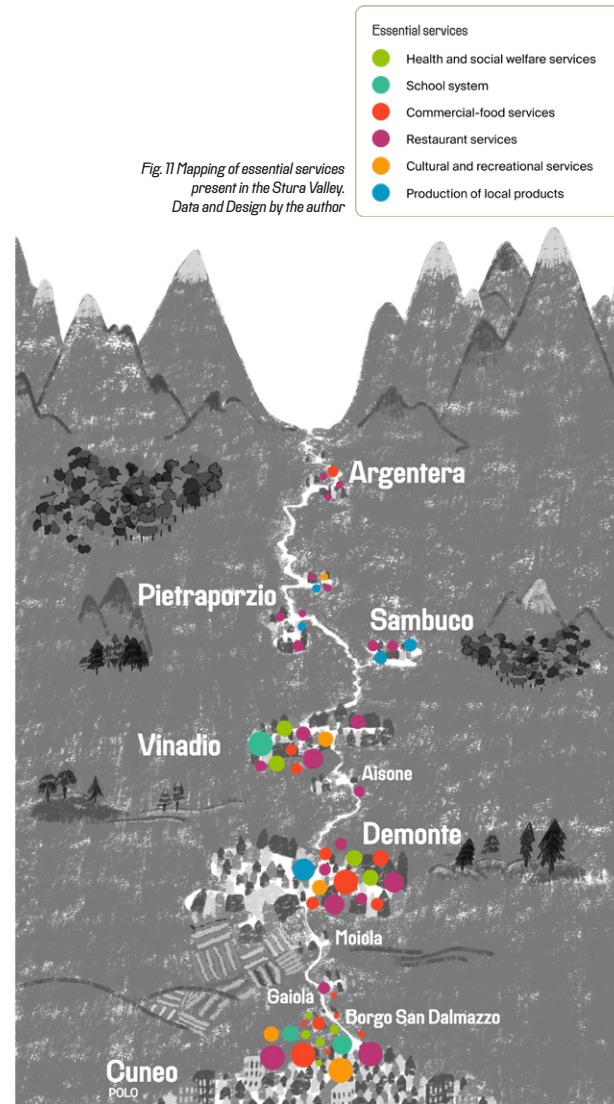


chance of regenerating themselves and opening up to new horizons (Department for Development and Economic Cohesion, 2014), as well as demonstrating how the local community is willing to “get involved in the management of territorial resources and municipalities” (Monturano and Sonzogno, 2022). Sustainable tourism, the promotion of local agri-food products, crafts and Occitan culture represent some of the axes that can be worked on to revitalize the valley, leveraging its unique historical and cultural identity. The preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of a lifestyle linked to local traditions can become key factors in making the Stura Valley an attractive place to live and work, in a balance between past and future.

However, it is important to remember and emphasize that the small size of markets in peripheral areas, linked to the lower availability of labor-power, linked to the phenomena of depopulation and aging of the population, makes the entrepreneurial sphere in these areas very complex and challenging.

Finally, despite the fact that the Upper Valley is a place of great tourism and cultural potential, with a rich offer of local activities and products that represent an opportunity for sustainable development and enhancement of local traditions, the lack of essential services to the population does not guarantee residents an acceptable level of quality of life. Forcing them to move more than 30km to take advantage of services defined as “proximity.”

Fig. 11 Mapping of essential services present in the Stura Valley. Data and Design by the author



### POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC PHENOMENA

The demographic history of the Stura Valley has been profoundly influenced by various historical, economic, and social factors that have driven the current patterns of population and human settlement in the Valley.

The population of the Valley, an unsurprising fact, decreases with increasing altitude. With 12,528 inhabitants in Borgo San Dalmazzo until it reaches around 80 in the municipality of Argentera, the last municipality in the valley. Demonte, on the other hand, the Valley’s capital, counts 1870 inhabitants.

The phenomenon of depopulation in the Stura Valley is part of the rather broader context of the internal and external migrations that have affected Italy since the end of the 19th century. In particular, the valley saw a significant emigration of its inhabitants to France in the post-1870 period, immediately after the Franco-Prussian War. France, experiencing a time of economic prosperity, attracted a considerable number of Italian workers, including 75 percent of Piedmontese shepherds, many of whom came from the Upper Stura Valley. However, this initially seasonal migration to Camargue and the Crau Plain, linked to the work cycles of grape harvesting and haymaking in France, gradually turned into a permanent migration, with many shepherds and their families choosing not to return to their homes in the Stura Valley.

As a result, this phenomenon was accelerated by the industrial revolution and the war events of the 20th century, which made economic opportunities in urban areas and abroad rather more attractive than agricultural and pastoral life in the valley. These cases set off the larger phenomenon of depopulation that still presides over this area.

The gradual demographic depopulation, particularly pronounced since the 1960s and 1970s, has left clear marks on the social fabric and spatial organization of the Stura Valley. Rather, the higher areas of the valley have experienced a more pronounced population decline, with some municipalities now having fewer than a hundred inhabitants. This depopulation has affected the economic and cultural life of the valley, impacting the ability to keep local traditions alive, including the Occitan language, and the ability to sustain traditional economic activities such as agriculture and pastoralism.

The current challenge for the Stura Valley is to find effective strategies to reverse or at least mitigate depopulation by enhancing the valley’s natural and cultural resources to attract new residents and stimulate economic development.



### HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Stura di Demonte Valley, has maintained over the centuries a close bond with traditions and customs dating back at least to the Middle Ages. Crossed by the SS21 road, which was built by Napoleon, the valley played a strategic role in the past as a military route and point of defense. The military works of the Savoy, such as Fort Albertino in Vinadio, testify to such history.

Nowadays, these structures have been transformed into exhibition and museum spaces, enriching the valley's tourist offerings. The presence of ancient spas in Bagni di Vinadio and local agro-pastoral production contributed to the region's charm and tourist vocation. The Lower Valley, with the municipalities of Roccasparvera, Gaiola, Moiola, Demonte and their hamlets offer interesting historical and cultural finds, such as ancient castles, ethnographic museums and Romanesque churches. While the

Upper Valley represents ideal territory for outdoor activities such as hiking in the summer months, and downhill skiing and ski mountaineering in the winter months. Thanks to its location among the mountains and the presence of secondary valleys and meadow basins, the Stura di Demonte Valley offers a varied and evocative environment for nature lovers and outdoor sports enthusiasts.

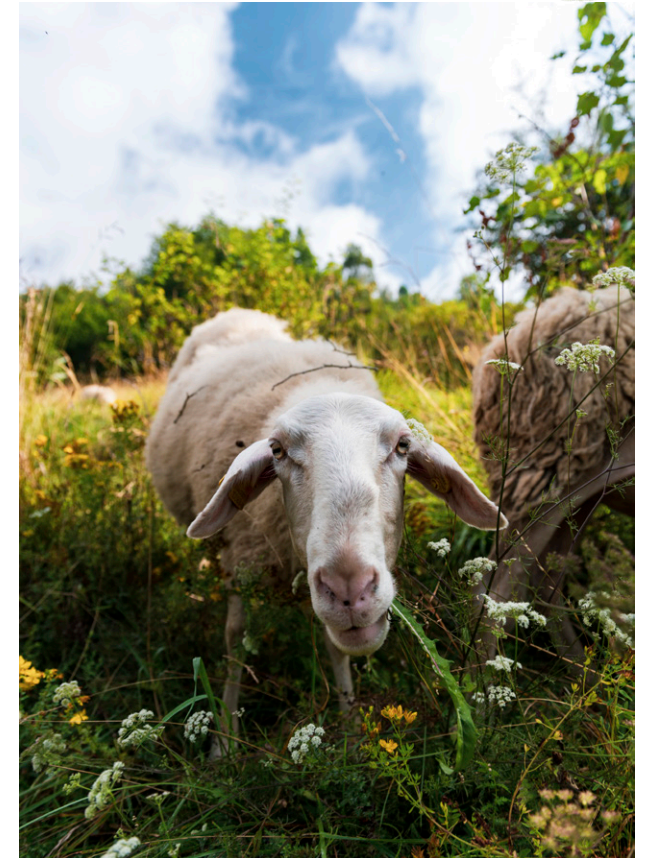
As previously mentioned, this land is, moreover, an area with a strong heritage linked to pastoralism and the Occitan idiom. Shepherding has been the backbone of the economy of the Stura Valley for centuries, playing a crucial role in the social and cultural life of local communities. In particular, the Valley is renowned as the place of origin of the Sambucana sheep.



**“A BREED OF SHEEP WITH FINE MEAT AND DELICATE FLAVOR, A FINE, DENSE WOOL THAT ACTS AS A NATURAL INSULATOR AND IS REMARKABLY STRONG ONCE SPUN, AND MILK, USED FIRST FOR FEEDING LAMBS AND THEN FOR PROCESSING INTO TOUMO FOR FAMILY NEEDS AND FOR SALE”**

*[Ecomuseo della Pastorizia]*  
TRANSLATION BY THE AUTHOR

This peculiar breed of sheep is distinguished by its hardiness and ability to adapt to rough and steep terrain, living even at high altitudes and withstanding low temperatures. This agility allows it to traverse steep gullies and steep slopes to reach high peaks where it can graze the freshest, most uncontaminated grass. Indeed, we could call it the perfect animal for these lands. The mountain pastures, practiced since ancient times, have been the hub around which the material and non-material culture of the valley has developed. Shepherding families moved their herds and flocks from their winter accommodations, located in the lower areas, to the summer pastures, located in the upper mountain areas rather, following a seasonal cycle that marked the life of the community. This practice was not only essential for the survival of the animals, providing them with cool pastures during the warm months, but also contributed to the maintenance of the



*Fig. 12 Sambucana Sheep. Photo courtesy of Unione Montana Valle Stura's Archive*

mountain landscape, preventing soil erosion and keeping forest areas clear. Another important aspect concerning the local and pastoral culture of the Stura Valley is the ancient practice of Transhumance, called Routo in the langue d'oc, meaning the "road" that shepherds traveled with their flocks from Provence, the Crau plains, and the Camargue territories to reach the rather higher Alpine pastures.



**“TRANSHUMANCE, FROM THE LATIN TRANS, “BEYOND”, AND HUMUS, “LAND”, IS THE SEASONAL MOVEMENTS OF LARGE HERDS OF SHEEP, CATTLE, GOATS AND HORSES. IT REMAINS A VERY LIVELY PRACTICE IN THE MOUNTAIN AND MEDITERRANEAN TERRITORIES, WHERE IT MARKS AND CONDITIONS, WITH A GREAT DIVERSITY OF FORMS, THE RELATIONS BETWEEN HUMANS, ANIMALS AND ECOSYSTEMS. ATTESTED SINCE THE 11TH CENTURY, THE TRANSHUMANCE BETWEEN PROVENCE AND THE ALPS STILL PLAYS A CONSIDERABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ROLE. EVERY YEAR, SOME 600,000 HEAD OF CATTLE SUMMER IN THE MOUNTAINS AND 90,000 COME TO WINTER FROM THE MOUNTAINS IN THE COASTAL DEPARTMENTS, VALUING A TOTAL AREA OF MORE THAN 850,000 HA.”**

*[La Maison de la Transumance, 2020]*

TRANSLATION BY THE AUTHOR



*Fig. 13 Sheep grazing in the hamlet of Ferrere  
Photo courtesy of Unione Montana Valle Stura's Archive*



Nowadays, shepherding still maintains a strong place in local culture, for instance with the “Giovani Pastori” shepherding school at Paraloup whose intent is to enhance the shepherd’s craft and ensure it will not be lost over time, to the activity carried out at the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia located in the hamlet of Pontebernardo, and the Consortium l’Escaroun, in langue d’oc “small herd,” to which around 60 or so breeders in the Valley have joined with the intention of safeguarding the prized Sambucana breed. It is important to note that, thanks in part to these collective efforts, products derived from the Sambuca sheep are now recognized as a Slow Food Presidium and Traditional Agricultural Product (PAT) of the Piedmont Region. Thus influencing the local diet, with the manufacture of products that have become distinctive elements of Stura Valley cuisine.

Furthermore, other key aspect to understanding the history and culture of this area is that of the Occitania. The Occitan territory is a linguistic and cultural area that covers several regions in southwestern Europe, encompassing parts of southern France, parts of northwestern Italy, and a portion of Spanish Catalonia. The Occitan language, or lingua d’òc, has been spoken in the valleys of Piedmont, including the Stura Valley, for centuries, testifying to these communities’ affiliation with Occitan culture. Despite the pressure of national languages and progressive cultural assimilation, Occitan dialects and traditions have been

preserved in the Stura Valley and are still alive thanks to the work of cultural associations and oral transmission between generations. Today, the Occitan language is considered a minority language. Festivals, music, poetry and other cultural expressions in the Occitan language are regularly celebrated, helping to keep the identity of this linguistic minority alive.



# A focus on the Upper Stura Valley

## THE PERIPHERAL MUNICIPALITIES

An in-depth look at the dynamics and specificities of a particularly significant part of the valley is proposed in this second part of the chapter: the peripheral municipalities of the upper valley. Through a detailed analysis, it seeks to shed light on the challenges and peculiarities that characterize Pietraporzio, Sambuco, and Argentera, which are considered marginal but rich in terms of priceless cultural and natural heritage.

The decision to focus the research on this area is not accidental but responds to a number of considerations dictated by direct observation of the disparities between the lower valley, rather more connected and served, and the upper valley, where the lack of essential services highlights a marked gap. These municipalities, in particular, show a particularly critical situation, not only because of the lack of specialized businesses, but also because of recent events such as the closure of the last bakery

in the Upper Valley area, located in Pietraporzio, which has raised significant concerns in the local community. Such an event not only signals the economic and social difficulties facing these areas, but also emphasizes the dramatic issue of depopulation and the challenges faced by businesses in such isolated settings.

Therefore, the following is intended to offer an overall picture of the three municipalities at the center of this survey, with an emphasis on their populations, available services, and territorial and cultural characteristics. The goal is to provide the reader with a solid basis for understanding the current dynamics of the Upper Stura Valley, anticipating the issues that will be addressed in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. It is intended, in this way, to offer not only a picture of the present difficulties, but also to enhance the potential inherent in these places, witnesses to a history and culture that endure despite adversity.

Fig. 14 Technical map of the upper Stura Valley  
Source: CTR (Carta Tecnica Regionale) 1:10.000 (1991-1995) - GEOSERVIZIO WMS

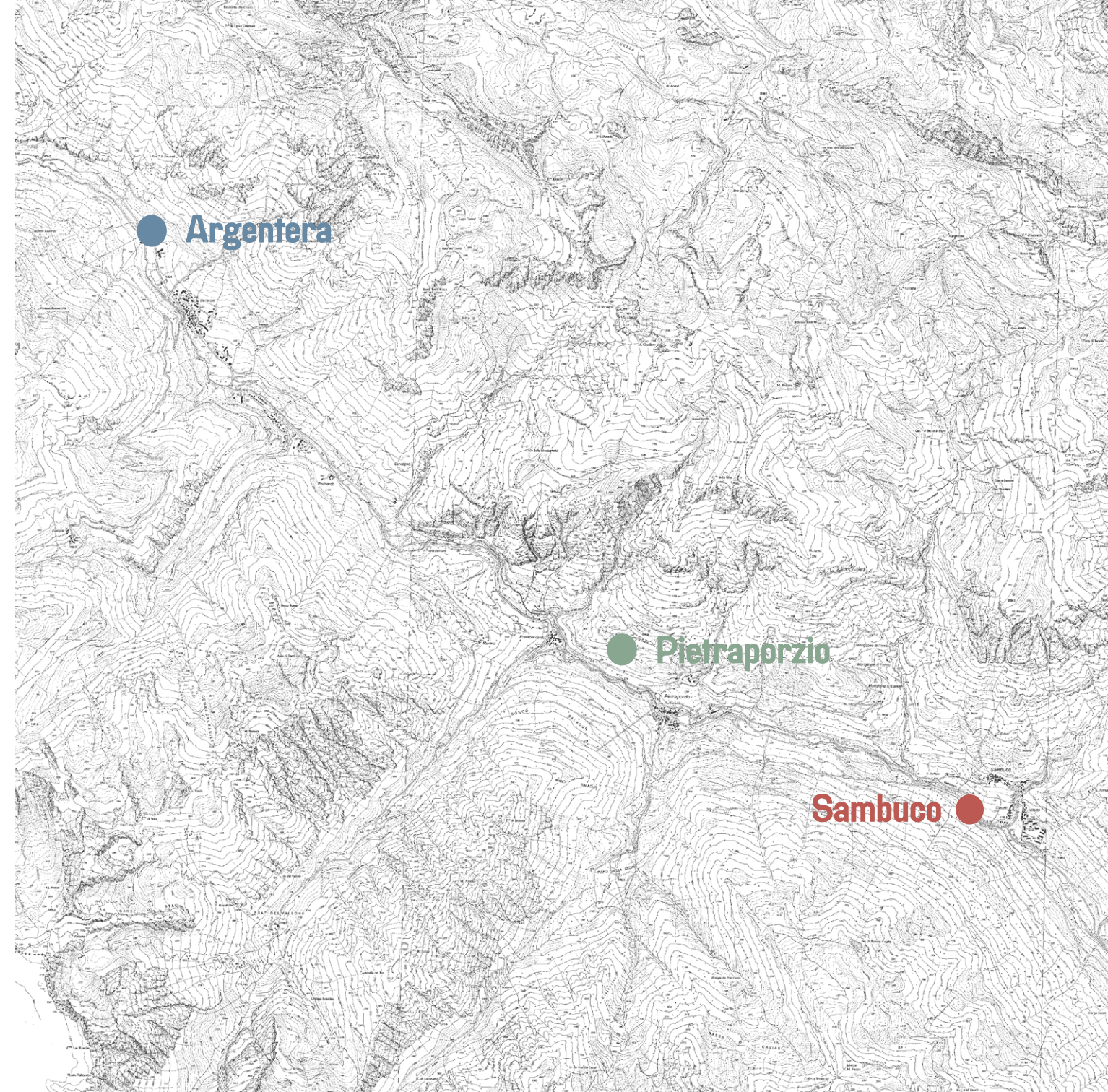






Fig. 15 A house in Sambuco with Mount Bersaio behind  
Photo courtesy of Unione Montana Valle Stura's Archive

# Sambuco

## GENERALITIES

Sambuco, the first municipality in the Stura di Demonte Valley to be considered peripheral, is located at an altitude of 1185m above sea level and is located 45km from Cuneo, the nearest urban pole. Despite its vast land area of 47 square kilometers, Sambuco has a modest and once thriving population, which has steadily declined over the centuries.



## POPULATION

Sambuco's history reflects the fate shared with many mountain communities, testifying to an era of splendor in the late 19th century, when it had up to 1,400 inhabitants among its various hamlets. However, a series of events, including the exodus to France and the inexorable emigration to the plains and the rather more developed urban centers discussed earlier, caused the population of these hamlets to diminish more and more. Currently, Sambuco's population counts 84 people, mostly elderly, with an average age of about 50. The largest population concentration falls in the 45-69 age group, while youth is represented to a smaller proportion.

## TERRITORY

The territory of Sambuco is dotted with ancient hamlets that have been uninhabited for years, such as Besaut, Chiardola Grande, Chiardoletta, Ciamin, Ciauceis, Clauzio, Moriglione Fondo, Moriglione San Lorenzo, Nicolau and Serre. The last inhabited hamlet, Moriglione di Fondo, saw its last inhabitant back in 1987, marking the end of an era. Located on the southern slope of the mountain, Sambuco enjoys a favorable climate and excellent sun exposure, ideal conditions for the cultivation of vast nutritious meadows and the growth of numerous cattle herds.

## Demographics

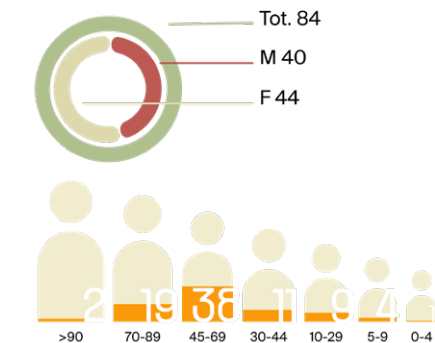


Fig. 16 Demographic Data on January 2023. Source: Municipality of Sambuco. Design by the author

Fig. 16b Technical map of the Sambuco  
Source: CTR (Carta Tecnica Regionale) 1:10.000 (1991-1995) - GEOSERVIZIO W/MS





### ECONOMY AND SERVICES

Given the morphological characteristics of Sambuco, the predominant activity in the municipality is agriculture, particularly sheep and cattle breeding, supported by several farms specialized in the production of goat cheese, such as the well-known Bars Chabrier, and other local products such as honey and flours, such as the Fossati farm.

Because of its traditional characteristics, Sambuco welcomes many visitors all year round, offering several eateries and hotels, such as the Albergo della Pace and La Meridiana.

However, as with many other municipalities in the area, the lack of essential services is a constant challenge for the local community, highlighting the difficulties of keeping daily life alive in these evocative lands.

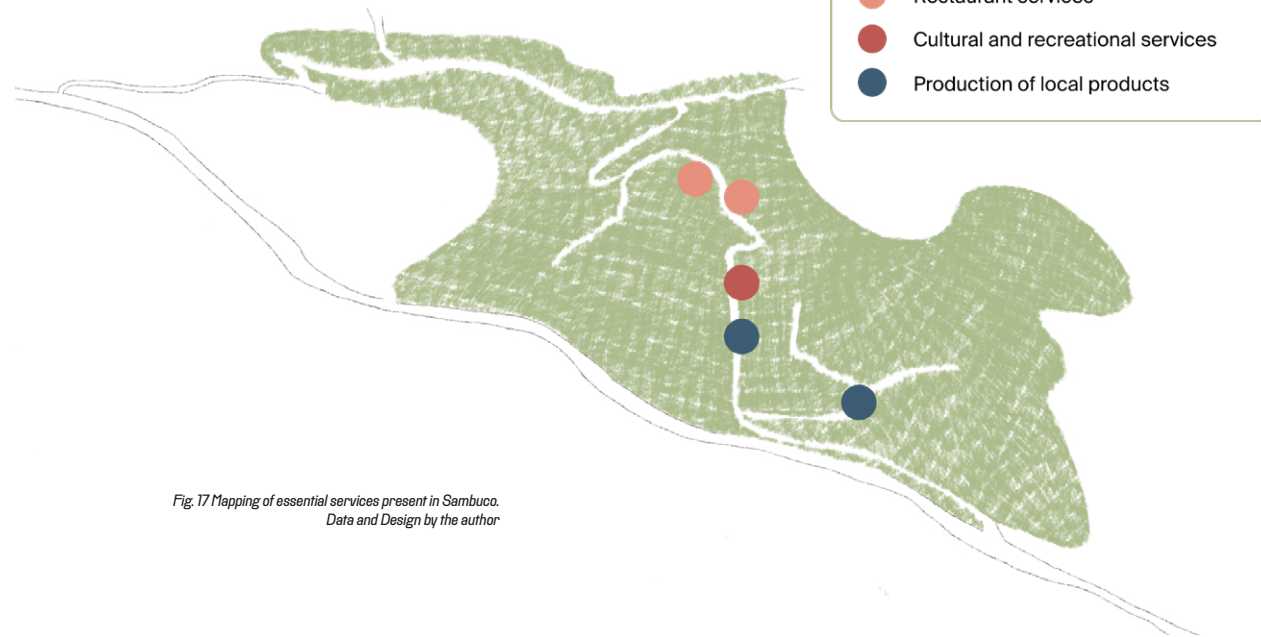


Fig. 17 Mapping of essential services present in Sambuco. Data and Design by the author



Fig. 18 View of Pontebernardo hamlet. Photo by the author.

# Pietraporzio

## GENERALITIES

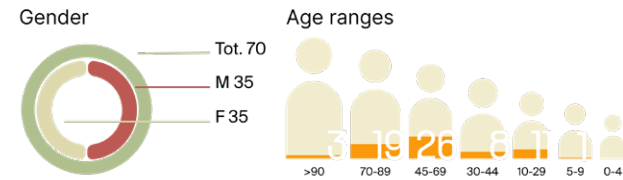
Pietraporzio, the second peripheral municipality in the Stura di Demonte Valley, stretches along the state road to the northwest, 49 kilometers away from Cuneo. Its territory includes the hamlets of Castello, Pontebernardo and Murenz, of which Pontebernardo is the beating heart, housing 31 percent of the municipality's total population. This hamlet, in addition to being the birthplace of the famous Olympic cross-country skier Stefania Belmondo, is renowned for being the home of the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia, an important cultural point in the valley that is actively engaged in the protection of the native Sambucana breed of sheep.



### POPULATION

Like Sambuco, Pietraporzio experienced its golden days in the last quarter of the 19th century, when agriculture and animal farming characterized local life and the population reached a peak of 880 inhabitants. However, in the period between 1870 and 1911, a drastic reduction in population was observed, a phenomenon attributed to the important flow of migration to France. Subsequently, young people also began to migrate to the city, attracted by the work in the industries on the lowlands.

#### Demographics



#### Population per hamlet



Fig. 19 Demographic data on January 2023. Source: Municipality of Pietraporzio. Design by the author

Fig. 19b Technical map of the Pietraporzio Source: CTR (Carta Tecnica Regionale) 1:10.000 (1991-1995) - GEOSERVIZIO W/M/S

### TERRITORY

Geographically, Pietraporzio rises 1246 meters above sea level, reaching 3031 meters on the high peak of Tenibre, one of the area's most impressive peaks. Its territory covers more than 50 square kilometers and includes two secondary valleys, characterized by a varied environmental morphology. It borders several municipalities, including Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée in France and the Maira Valley on the opposite side. Pietraporzio is characterized by being crossed by the Stura River, dividing it into two parts distinct in morphology. The northern side of the mountain, called "Ubac" in the Occitan language, is covered with fir and larch forests and crossed by water-rich little valleys. On this slope we find a barite mine, an important site both geologically and socially, the subject of research and land exploitation during the 1950s-60s (Unione Montana, 2018). On the opposite slope, known as the "adrech" and exposed to the south, lodgepole pine and herbs dominate on drier and sunnier soils.



### ECONOMY AND SERVICES

Throughout its history, Pietraporzio has experienced moments of prosperity related to agriculture and animal farming, but also periods of transformation, such as the one marked by the construction of the hydroelectric reservoir and power station between 1953 and 1960.

Before 1957, the year of the great flood, Pietraporzio was known in the valley as an agricultural paradise. Where the vast green meadows, facing south (les dreches), were covered with cereals (rye, potatoes, barley, oats, lentils) and fruit trees (cherry, plum, pear), and inhabited by numerous herds of sheep and cattle. However, with the construction of the power plant, arose, numerous and diverse services to the population. To name a

few, the Genova boarding house, La trattoria le due colombe, L'Osteria dell'Allegria, the Marino bakery, the White Goods store, and a Food Cooperative. These activities, allowed residents to supplement their labor during the winter months, months when agriculture slowed down. Thus, they brought a new prosperity to the local community, creating services and job opportunities.

However, with the time passing and the emigration of young people to the cities, agricultural territories disappeared and services began to wane (Cordero and Martini, 1990). Nowadays, few services remain in Pietraporzio, and they are mainly aimed at tourism.



Fig. 20 Mapping of essential services present in Pietraporzio. Data and Design by the author



Fig. 21 View of Argentera. Photo courtesy of Unione Montana Valle Stura's Archive

# Argentera

## GENERALITIES

Once past the imposing Barricate mountains that surrounds the hamlet of Pontebernardo, continuing in the direction of the Colle della Maddalena we reach the last municipality of the Alta Valle Stura: Argentera, a township distinguished by its elevated location and vast territorial extension.

Although the municipality's name is Argentera, the administration of the township has since a long time moved to the hamlet of Bersezio, which houses most of the population (79%). The other hamlets include Villaggio Primavera and Ferrere, a small village nestled in a small valley 1900 meters above sea level.

With an altitude of 1684 meters above sea level and an area of 76 km<sup>2</sup>, Argentera is considered one of the highest municipalities in Italy, but its low population density (1,01 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) reflects its declining population.



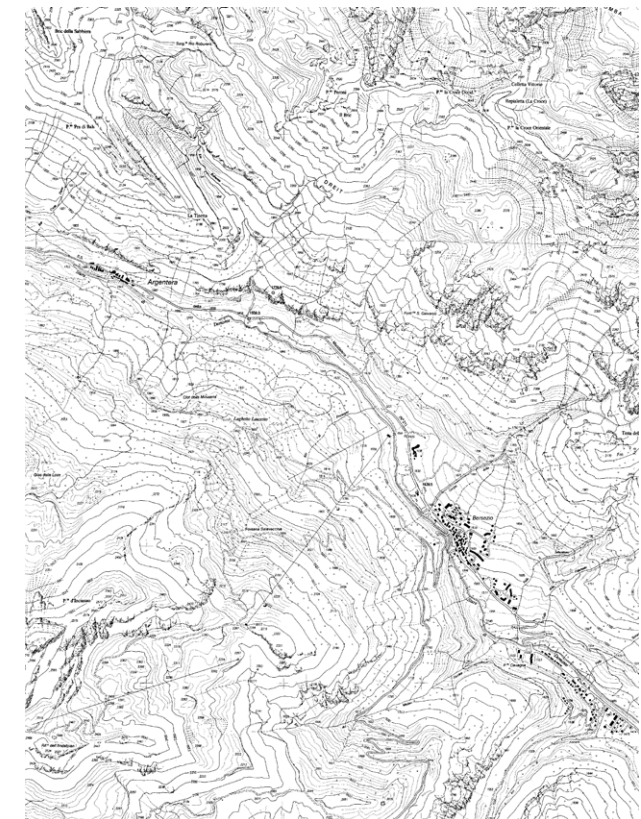
## POPULATION

Like the previous municipalities, Argentera saw a thriving population until the end of the 19th century, followed by a significant decline due to transhumance and industrialization. The draw of labor from factories in the lowlands further accentuated this decline.

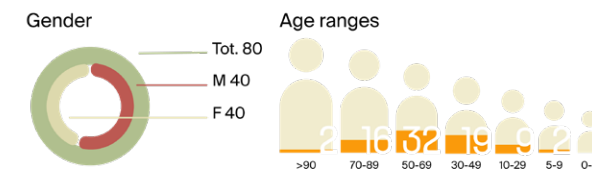
In the postwar period, 30 inhabitants remain in the hamlet of Ferrere, which, however, it loses in the early 1960s; instead, the hamlets of Serre and Grange have already been uninhabited since well before the end of World War II, and Argentera begins its precipitous decline in these years. With the closing of the elementary school, the post office, the police station and finally the town hall in the 1985.

## TERRITORY

Argentera is surrounded by prominent peaks approaching 3,000 meters in altitude, with a landscape characterized by forests on one side and dry, sunny terrain on the other. Livestock farming and agriculture remain the main activities, but the municipality is also renowned as the home of freeriding and a popular destination for ski mountaineers and hikers.



## Demographics



## Population per hamlet



Fig. 22 Demographic Data on January 2023. Source: Municipality of Argentera Design by the author

Fig. 22b Technical map of the Argentera Source: CTR (Carta Tecnica Regionale) 1:10.000 (1991-1995) - GEOSERVIZIO W/M/S



### ECONOMY AND SERVICES

The establishment of the ski resort facilities in the late 1970s had a significant impact on the local economy, enabling the development of businesses such as mini-markets, pastry stores, sporting goods outlets, and many tourist accommodations.

It is precisely in these years that the hamlet of Bersezio witnesses the great urbanization boom, the second-home and real estate investment expansion phenomenon, and the mass assault of the holiday resorts. Massive concrete mansions and buildings completely extraneous to local architecture are built, some of which will never be finalized. Thus losing great cultural and natural heritage.

However, since 2019, the facilities have been closed due to economic problems, renovations, and the growing effects of climate change, which have made it rather more difficult to find snow at lower altitudes. This raises questions about the future of ski resorts at lower altitudes, as well as the future of these businesses.

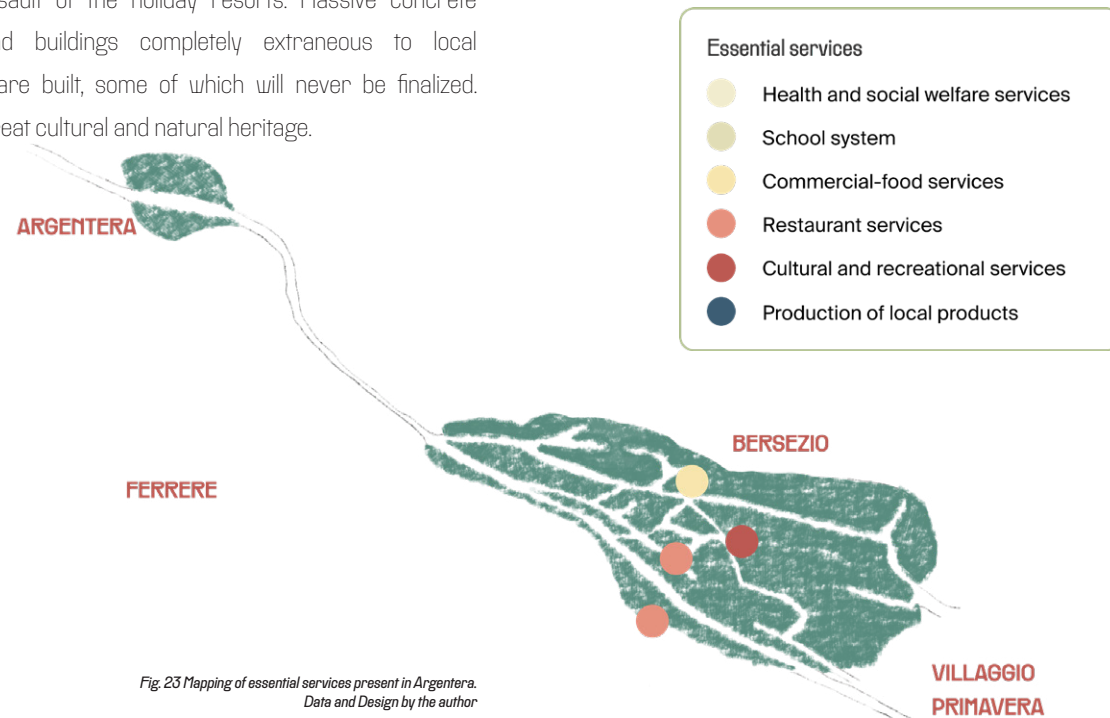


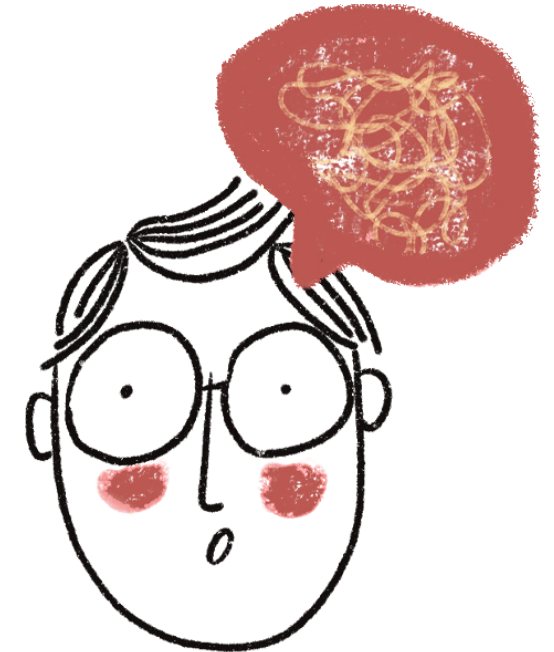
Fig. 23 Mapping of essential services present in Argentera. Data and Design by the author



# Small Talks

## RESEARCH INTERVIEW

During the course of the project, and especially in this initial research phase, the author conducted a series of interviews with individuals and organizations that are actively engaged in living or working in the Stura Valley area. These conversations can be viewed as an informal chat between the author and the participants, during which various aspects related to their perceptions of the territory were explored, such as which challenges they encountered and what future perspectives they envision. The interviews collected below are those considered important for the development of the final project.





# A Talk with Paola Zenoni

## A REFLECTION ON TOURISM IN THE STURA VALLEY

On the afternoon of Friday, October 27, 2023, at the Valley Gate office in Demonte, the author had the pleasure of meeting Paola Zenoni, a cultural operator and key figure in the promotion of tourism in the Stura Valley. Paola, originally from the province of Cuneo, moved to the Stura Valley after doing her dissertation in Museum Anthropology specifically on the local area.

During the meeting, Paola shared some key aspects that emerged from her research, focusing on the theme of cross-border flows and the importance of the links between generations and the territory of origin. Through interviews conducted with several generations, Paola highlighted a strong emotional and cultural bond that connects the youth of the valley to their territory, despite the challenges of living in a mountainous area. However, she also emphasized the need for greater awareness and adaptability for those who choose to live in these communities, highlighting the challenges related to accessing basic services such as internet connectivity.

Paola also discussed the key role played by the Porta di Valle, the tourism office that is committed in organizing workshops, excursions, and other cultural activities for both tourists and local residents. Through its “Valle Stura Experience” initiative, Porta di Valle aims to create opportunities for those living in and visiting the valley by promoting activities that celebrate local traditions and create meaningful connections with the area.

Finally, the tourism landscape of the Stura Valley was explored, highlighting a change in tourism flows with an increase in English-speaking visitors and a greater variety in the types of tourists, including vacationers, second-home owners and transit tourists. In conclusion, the meeting with Paola Zenoni offered an in-depth look at life and tourism in the Stura Valley, highlighting the importance of cultural ties and the wealth of opportunities offered by this mountain region.



# A Talk with Giulia Jannelli

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOLIDARITY

The conversation documented below, held on November 12, 2023 at the Locanda della Pecora Nera (Black Sheep Inn) in Pontebernardo, was conducted together with Giulia Jannelli, manager of the same Locanda. It is important to mention that during the course of the project, the author had several opportunities to share ideas and suggestions regarding the development of the project with Giulia, who is an important active player in the community.

Giulia Jannelli, born in Turin and raised in Milan, after living between Madrid and Buenos Aires, where she attended a master's degree in international relations, decided to move to the Stura Valley, in Demonte, together with her partner and daughter.

Here, in May 2018, she founded Germinale – Community Agricultural Cooperative. Her goal, has always been to reestablish a sense of community in the Valley area. For the past couple of years she has been running, together with her partner, the Locanda La Pecora Nera in the hamlet of Pontebernardo.

In addition, due to the recent closure of the Pietraporzio Bakery, he has set up a small “service store” inside the inn where some basic necessities can be found.

The purpose of the talk was to present the interviewee with an initial idea of the re-design of the Bakery, and to understand her point of view as a businesswoman active in the Upper Valley area. During the interview, issues regarding public transportation, leisure time, and the necessity of employment for the regeneration of these places were addressed.

**FROM NEXT YEAR THERE IS NO LONGER GUARANTEED BUS SERVICE IN THE WINTER MONTHS, HOW CAN WE EXPECT TO PUT THESE AREAS BACK IN THE CENTER IF THEY ARE NOT EVEN CONNECTED?**

Regarding transportation, Giulia suggests a traveling sales system that travels to the different villages in the upper valley to contrast the lack of communal transportation.



A major obstacle, according to Giulia, is the clear division between the villages, where everyone acts independently:

**IF I AM FROM PIETRAPORZIO I WILL NOT GO SHOPPING IN SAMBUCCO AND VICE VERSA.**

Through her perspective, she proposed to stop considering the upper valley as a fragmented territory and instead think of a widespread system in collaboration with more actors and administrations. Also discussed was the need for an itinerant community space in different municipalities to create a network of villages that would encourage people to visit and frequent the other Upper Valley villages as well. Among other things, the importance of reactivating a Pro-loco to organize cultural and recreational events and activities was highlighted.

During the conversation, the need for a consortium of producers also emerged; there are already some in the area, but they are rather concentrated in the lower valley. The consortium, according to Giulia, is a key resource to ensure high quality products and short supply chain production.

Finally, Giulia points out the importance of developing projects that increase labor supply. Only through the possibility of employment is it possible to think about the regeneration of these territories.



Fig. 24 Giulia Jannelli at Locanda La Pecora Nera. Photo by the author



# A Talk with Patrizia Palonta

## ON THE FUTURE OF MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES

The first meeting between Patrizia and the undersigned took place as part of the CIO – Costruire il cambiamento (Building Change) project, which promotes the civic and political activation of women in the mountain areas of Cuneo, an important meeting was held on Friday, December 1 at the municipality of Frabosa Soprana. Before the meeting began, there was a chance to engage with the President of the Mountain Women's Coordination, Patrizia Palonta, who shared valuable reflections and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of mountain communities.

**“THE COORDINAMENTO DONNE DI MONTAGNA, AN ASSOCIATION DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF ANCIENT FEMALE KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN TERRITORIES, IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING WOMEN WITH THE TOOLS TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS, THROUGH RAISING AWARENESS OF GENDER ISSUES AND CREATING A NETWORK OF CONTACTS AND KNOWLEDGE, THE ASSOCIATION AIMS TO ENCOURAGE MUTUAL COOPERATION AND ENHANCE THE DIVERSITY OF WOMEN'S CULTURES IN ALPINE MARGINAL AREAS”**

*(from the website Coordinamento Donne di Montagna)  
TRANSLATION BY THE AUTHOR*



During the meeting, several crucial topics were addressed. One of the main topics was tax breaks for business activities in mountainous areas.

Patrizia raised the issue of the 1994 Carlotto Law, which promoted the preservation and enhancement of mountain areas. However, although it has been rather more than two decades since this law came into effect, there has been a gap between the promises and the actual implementation on the ground. Precisely in order to address these challenges, Patrizia suggested the establishment of a specific VAT number for mountain areas, which would provide tax relief for mountain municipalities and disincentives to illegal work. This proposal aims to promote local economic development and ensure fair tax treatment for area-related activities.

Further discussed was the creation of a "Service Shop," inspired by the initiative of the Mayor of Briga Alta, a small village on the border with the Liguria region, Federica Lanteri. This project consists of the opening of a major store run in the municipality hall, which can meet the needs of the local community in terms of grocery shopping and basic necessities.

Finally, Patrizia spoke about the traditional system of the Roueda, in local dialect "the wheel", a solidarity practice in which community members helped each other in agricultural and pastoral work. This ancient system, based on reciprocity and collaboration, could be a source of inspiration for promoting solidarity and social cohesion in mountain communities.

In conclusion, the meeting with Patrizia Palonta highlighted the importance of promoting the sustainable and inclusive development of mountain communities by enhancing the cultural and social heritage of women and adopting innovative solutions to address the economic and social challenges of the area



Fig. 25 Coordinamento Donne di Montagna (2024, January 4). Imprese femminili: sfide, opportunità e innovazione in montagna [Photograph]. Pietraporzio. Photo by the author



# A Talk with Matthieu Roà

## ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE UPPER VALLEY

On November 20, 2023, an enlightening meeting was held in the hamlet of Pontebernardo with Matthieu Roà, a resident and town counselor of Pietraporzio. Over a cup of coffee, there was an opportunity to explore his visions and ideas regarding the re-design of the Bakery and the changes needed in the Upper Valley.

Matthieu is one of those young people who, born and raised in this mountainous region, have chosen to stay and face challenges with determination. A geology graduate from the Faculty of Applied geological sciences at the University of Turin (UNITO), Matthieu is currently working on his PhD, pursuing his passion for the land and his commitment to land development.

During our meeting, Matthieu shared some crucial points that he believes are essential to promote change and sustainable development in the upper valley. He emphasized the importance of collaboration among the different villages in the valley and among their residents, highlighting the need to join forces to address municipality challenges and to implement shared projects.

Matthieu also emphasized the importance of approaching people and actively involving them in change processes, avoiding frightening them with sudden innovation and transformation. This respectful and inclusive approach is key to ensuring local community support and participation in development initiatives.

Another crucial point raised by Matthieu concerns the rehabilitation and renovate the Barite mine, a project to which he has devoted time and effort during his years of service as a city councilor. As a geologist, Matthieu sees this initiative not only as an opportunity to enhance a piece of history linked to the area, but also as a potential tourist attraction for the entire area.

In conclusion, the meeting with Matthieu offers a glimpse into the aspirations and ideas of a young man committed to promoting the transformation and sustainable development of the upper valley.





03.

# POSSIBLE DESIGN CONTRIBUTIONS



## Introduction

Throughout this chapter, is seen how design has taken different forms over the years and how it has gradually moved further and further away from its initial definition, purely based on its role as a mass producer of objects and described as an activity exclusively intended for experts.

In the next pages is discussed how and why design can be seen mostly as a culture, which yes, seeks to give function and meaning to a given product, but at the same time is a practice made up of open processes involving different actors and is based on the idea that everyone can design and use their skills to develop cutting-edge and innovative living solutions.

In contemporary society, characterised by an incessant flux of change, the role of design emerges as crucial in orienting and shaping our world.

**“IN A CHANGING WORLD, EVERYONE DESIGNS: EACH INDIVIDUAL PERSON AND EACH COLLECTIVE SUBJECT, FROM ENTERPRISES TO INSTITUTIONS, FROM COMMUNITIES TO CITIES AND REGIONS, MUST DEFINE AND ENHANCE A LIFE PROJECT. SOMETIMES THESE PROJECTS GENERATE UNPRECEDENTED SOLUTIONS; SOMETIMES THEY CONVERGE ON COMMON GOALS AND REALIZE LARGER TRANSFORMATIONS.”**

*[EZIO MANZINI, 2015]*

*Fig.26 On the left page: drawing by the author*



As pointed out by Ezio Manzini in his essay “Design in a Liquid World,” we find ourselves in an era defined by Bauman as liquid modernity, where fluidity and fleeting replace the solidity and stability of the agricultural and industrial societies of the past. In this context, design is transformed, assuming new dimensions and responsibilities.

Extending to the design of services, events, interactions and experiences, the new objects protagonists of our daily lives which takes place in a specific time and space through the cooperation of various actors. Within this landscape, the consumer takes on an active role: from being a mere fruitor, they become co-creators of value, actively participating in the service process.

Design, therefore, can no longer limit itself to considering only the aesthetic or functional aspect of a product, but must understand and facilitate the dynamics of the interaction and co-production that are established around it.

As such, design becomes a widespread practice, extended to all actors in the community: individuals, businesses, public administrations, and cultural organisations. Each entity is called to strategically design its daily lives, adapting and responding to the challenges of an ever-changing world.

In this scenario, the designer assumes an extreme relevant role: a “specialist,” a facilitator who uses his or her specific skills to guide the convergence of actors toward shared goals and innovative solutions. The designer becomes a process activator, providing the tools and skills necessary for individuals and communities to rather more effectively and autonomously design their own futures.

Consequently, throughout the chapter, the author, is concerned with presenting and analyzing these design approaches that will then in a second phase be implemented and applied to the development of the final project. Among these approaches presented will be Service design, Participatory Design, Design for Social Innovation, Place-making, and Design Activism.

Finally, the ultimate goal of the chapter is to give the reader a broad view of the field of design today and the role of the designer in this context.



# Service Design

**“SERVICES ARE COMPLEX, HYBRID ARTEFACTS. THEY ARE MADE UP OF THINGS – PLACES AND SYSTEMS OF COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION – BUT ALSO OF HUMAN BEINGS AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS.”**

*(Manzini, 2011)*

## INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE DESIGN

Nowadays design has moved away from its original definition, a definition where it was considered as a solid production system creating solid and stable materials over time: objects. Today, in the so-called liquid modernity (Baumann, 2000), where everything is transitory and experimental, intangible elements have introduced new ways of designing, producing and consuming (Manzini, 2006). Consequently extending to the design of services, experiences and knowledge. Nowadays, the product is no longer just a physical object, but is transformed into an event, an interaction, an experience that takes place in a specific time and space through the cooperation of various actors. Hence, service design fits perfectly into this context described by Manzini in his essay “Design in Liquid Modernity” (2006).

Service design has existed as a concept since the early 1980s, however, service design was formally recognized as a distinct field

in 1991 by Michael Erlhoff and Birgit Mager at the Köln International School of Design. Despite its initial adversity in the design world, it now stands on the pedestal in teaching, researching, and rather more generally in the design domain. Services are becoming the leading driver of the economy, moreover they are fundamental for all those issues regarding the welfare sphere and social domains (Mager, 2008). Consequently, Service design is becoming more and more important in both private and public sector: organisations, companies, etc need to provide solutions using fewer resources, and that are more effective and tailored to the citizens need. That’s why service design is fundamental to design better and more efficient solutions, to redesign existing offerings and to support better decisions in order to create a better social and economic value (Foglieni et Al., 2018).

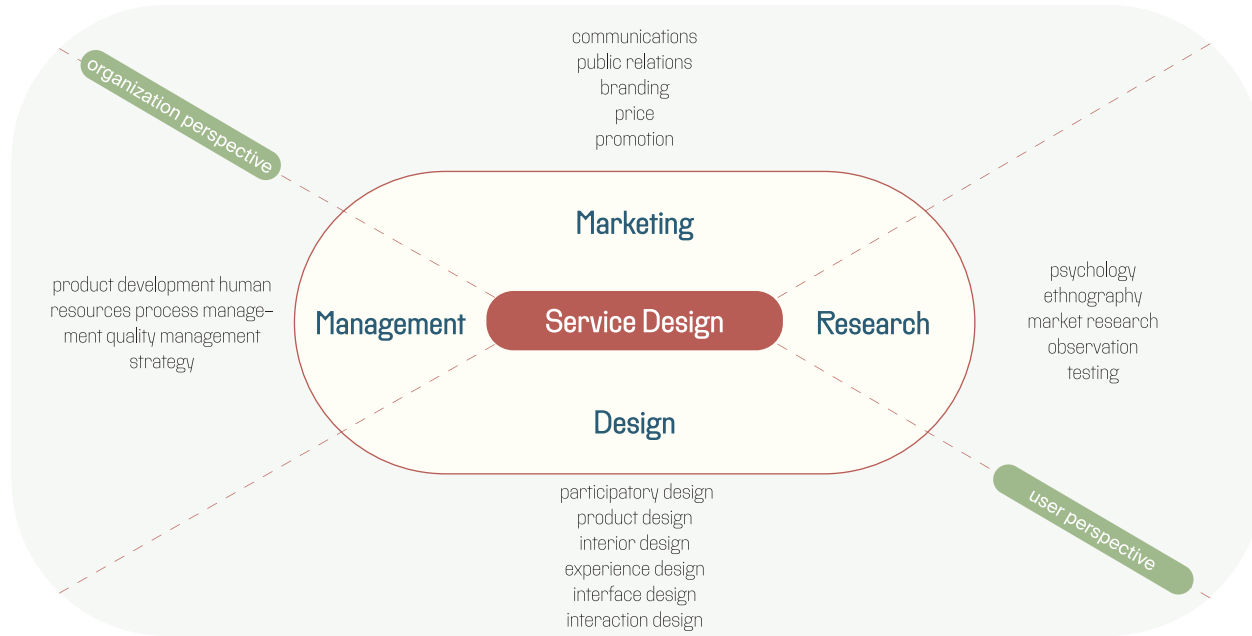


Fig.27 Service design multidisciplinary nature [elaboration from Moritz 2005] Source: Foglieni, F., Villari, B., & Maffei, S. (2018). Design by the author

Service design is a multidisciplinary practice, drawing from psychology, marketing, management, IT, interaction, user-centred, and graphic design. This diversity allows service designers to address both intangible interactions and physical elements in service development (Foglieni et Al., 2018).

However, it is primarily recognised for its strong user-centric approach for whom it is concerned with designing the functionality and form that services can take from the perspective of clients. Moreover, it is often associated with the digital world: aiming to ensure that service interfaces are useful, usable, and desirable from the customer's point of view and effective, efficient, and distinctive from the provider's point of view.



## “SERVICE IS A DIFFICULT WORD” *(Foglieni et al., 2018)*

### FROM SERVICE TO SERVICE DESIGN

To provide the definition of service design, however, one must first define what a service is. Many authors over the years have tried to find a tailored definition for “services”, at times comparing them to objects and trying to highlight their similarities and differences (see IHIP Paradigms), others by referring to them as the activities of the so-called tertiary sector. However, since the the first half of the 20th century it has been almost impossible to describe and define what a service is. Partly because services are materials that are constantly changing and evolving.

If we search for the meaning of the word service in the dictionary it says “the action of helping or doing work for someone” (Foglieni et Al., 2018). Thus, service is an activity who involve someone doing something for someone else. However, service does not only mean tertiary activity (Placenti, 2006), but first and foremost it is

“a service that some people perform for the benefit, satisfaction, and support of other people’s activity” (Il Sole 24 Ore, 1988).

Following the IHIP Paradigms, a service is distinguished from a product for its:

1. **Intangibility** : services are activities/performances rather than physical objects
2. **Heterogeneity** : because every performance is unique and depends on the behaviour of the provider and the user, and the interaction in between the two.
3. **Inseparability** : of consumption and production.
4. **Perishability** or inability to inventory.

This discussion changed significantly with the work of Vargo and Lusch published in 2004. By which the two researchers began



to view services as platforms for value creation, rather than in relation to objects. This perspective has been critical not only for companies competing in service industries, emphasizing the need to understand and manage service elements in customer relationships to secure a sustainable competitive advantage, but for the entire design scene and the emergence of service design as a discipline. With the “service logic,” Vargo and Lusch, reoriented the view of services toward a customer-centric approach, recognizing services as co-created experiences between provider and beneficiary.

However, products and services often fulfil the same needs, but what distinguishes a service is its occurrence within a specific spatial and temporal context, involving an exchange of actions among participants. The relationship that is established between the different actors of the service brings into play communicative, affective, symbolic processes and not a simple tool exchange (Placenti, 2006). Consequently, we could call precisely this interaction, that is created between the system and the user, the service itself. Citing Meroni and Selloni (2011), services are complex and hybrid artefacts: networks of people, products, and places working together towards a common goal.

Along the same lines comes the thinking of Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) who categorize service design from design for services.

In fact, unlike traditional service design, which focuses on the discipline and general practice of service design, “Design for Service” is seen as a context-related approach. Finally, we could say Design for services represents the research side of service design. It is based on the dominant logic of services and emphasizes design as a transformative process, focusing on creating conditions for interactions and relationships in a complex socio-material world (Kimbell, 2011).

Therefore, with the advent of the Service-dominant Logic, design began to approach services as potential objects of design, leading to the growth of new design competencies focused on service design, and finally has ceased to be seen as a mere toolbox of marketing. Furthermore, this shift led to the development of service design as a discipline, focusing on designing the entire system of interactions and relationships within services. Service Design adopts a holistic view, and establishes its unique identity through an emphasis on user-centred design and systemic thinking. This approach has solidified Service Design’s role as a crucial and distinct area of expertise, aimed at managing complexity and orchestrating the elements of people and infrastructure to foster meaningful interactions, as noted by Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011).



### TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

The service design process has been widely discussed, even though different perspectives always have in common an initial research phase and a final step of delivery of the solution to be implemented before going to market. The most known model is the Double-diamond developed by the British Council who is structured in 4 phases: Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver.

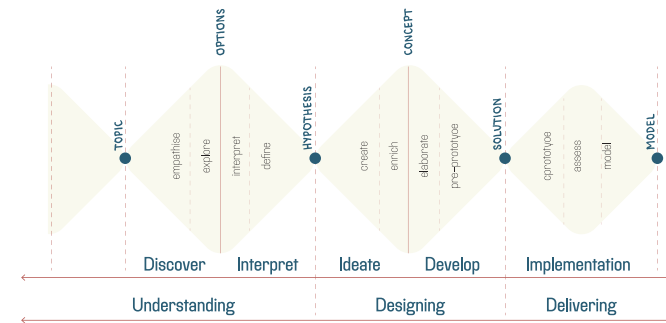


Fig.28 Double Diamond model. Source: PSSD Final Synthesis Design Studio 1 | 2022/23. Design by the author.

Nevertheless this remains a very basic approach to structure such a complex design process. Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) identify as well a four step process, which start with a research phase as in the DD method, but it ends with a prototyping phase aimed at the materialisation of the service concept. The Developing phase in Meroni and Sangiorgi focuses on the elaboration of services ideas more detailed, thus excluding the implementation phase from the process.

Service design not only leverages established design skills and process stages but also prompts new inquiries about optimising design methods as creative tools.

Regarding the user’s perspective, it’s crucial to design interactions between the user and the service through offerings and touch points that facilitate these interactions. In designing those touch points is extremely important to understand which are the needs of users for a service experience and the characteristics they need to have to meet those expectations. Therefore, the research phase in a service design process is extremely important. Being mainly qualitative and often based on observational techniques. A good research strategy would be to start with collection of quantitative data, to then move to the collection of qualitative insights through user-research. Moreover, the data collected with the research can be visualised with specific tools, such as personas: archetypes of characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes of the people observed during the research. In general conceptual maps are the most visual tools used by service designer, and they can focus on actors/stakeholders, highlighting roles, relationships, activities, touch points or user journeys. (Foglieni et Al., 2018)



Fig. 29 The service design process: from research to implementation. Source: Foglieni, F., Villari, B., & Tiaffei, S. (2018). Design by the author



The service offering is closely tied to the value proposition, which promises customers value from the service. This offering is the means through which users realise the service's value proposition and includes what people can purchase or find within the service. Evaluating the value proposition is essential both for validating the initial idea and for assessing the service post-launch. Designing the service involves considering both back-office and front-office activities that allow user access, encompassing interactions between people, spaces, and objects that form the service's touch points. These can be digital or physical and include essential information for user engagement.

To design such a complex system, designers and service practitioners employ specific visual mapping tools:

- **Offering Map** Defines primary and secondary offerings and their connection to touch points.
- **System Map** Visualises the complexity of actors involved and their relationships.
- **Service Blueprint** Details back and front office activities throughout the system, highlighting relationships and touch points.
- **Customer Journey Map** Captures the total user experience, often through storyboards, images, or videos, detailing each step.

Furthermore, the role of prototyping in refining and improving services. Prototypes, storyboards, and rapid prototyping techniques are essential for visualising new service processes and determining the direction of the design process.

Finally, these tools are crucial for understanding and designing the intricate web of interactions and relationships that constitute a service system.



### THE FUTURE AND CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DESIGN

Service design is a rapidly growing field that has since been given a thorough theoretical and methodological basis and has established itself internationally in research, teaching, and consulting. However is still a young discipline that contains many exiting, undiscovered, lines of research and continues to invite us to explore the unknown and pursue exiting experiments (Mager, 2008).

However, with the growing acknowledgement of service design as fundamental to social innovation and through its user-centered orientation, public agencies are increasingly being pushed toward the provision of high-quality solutions. This also implies more democratic and participatory decision-making, characterized by effective activities and better optimization of resources. As we saw earlier, service design can provide these arrangements through a range of tools and techniques that enable organizations to creatively introduce new concepts and solutions. This approach, which emphasizes user research, the use of visualization methods and prototyping, makes intangible

aspects such as relationships and experiences more tangible and understandable. Moreover, it encourages people to think creatively like real designers, turning knowledge into ideas and actively collaborating with end users.

Finally, service design, according to a reflection by Thakara (2005), focuses on developing solutions that take into account user satisfaction and well-being, and supports organizations and communities to build a shared vision of transformation by adopting tools for co-creating and prototyping services, proposing new approaches aimed at promoting change in the organization and society. Hence this fundamental approach in today's planning.



# Design for Social Innovations

## THE RISE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

Nowadays, we face an overwhelming multitude of social and environmental concerns, and these provide the basis for a huge wave of social innovations (Young Foundation, 2006). Moreover, this wave of social innovations is a real driver for the transition to more sustainable lifestyles, both environmentally and socially. Thus, those innovations represent a paradigm shift in addressing complex societal challenges.

With the term Social Innovation we refer to those changes in the way individuals or communities act to solve a problem or generate new opportunities. Those innovations are driven mainly by changes in behaviour than technology or market, and they typically are bottom-up initiatives rather than top-down, harnessing collective action and creative collaboration to tackle pressing social and environmental issues.

When facing problems, humans, by nature, tend to reinvent themselves and make something new, in essence: they innovate (Manzini, 2015). Therefore, we can assume that social innovations have always existed. But in recent decades, they have started to actively spread, as a result of two main factors, such as the wide distribution of information and communication to which we are exposed and the increasing number of people who, in different situations, have to reinvent themselves every day.

In the nowadays society, where everyone is led to experiment new ways of being and doing, the world has become a real laboratory of ideas where individuals and communities gather together to solve a problem and exploit new opportunities.

Just as many of the people living in Western countries, and therefore considered wealthier, are expected to redefine their



way of life and their idea of well-being, so too are the remainder of people living in less prosperous countries or situations. Such as situations of extreme poverty or environmental disasters, but also those territories that are by definition less favoured due to their geographical and social configuration, as in the case of mountainous and rural areas, the subject of this research. It is precisely these people and communities who are most in need of social innovation, as traditional economic models and top-down initiatives cannot achieve a fair solution. Instead, in these situations, social innovations have great potential to change the entire socio-technical system and consequently achieve a real positive impact.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND ESSENCE OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Over the years, it became clear how such innovations are particularly promising in solving problems considered impossible. Indeed, unlike governments and other types of actors, social innovations go against traditional economic models and dualistic constructs (public vs. private, producer vs. consumer, etc.) and propose a new vision where available resources and capacities are rethought to achieve new functions and meanings. Consequently, they create “discontinuities” with normal ways of acting (Manzini, 2015). Manzini described those discontinuities as “Local discontinuities” (Manzini, 2015, p14), the adjective ‘local’ serves precisely to define how these radical changes are closely tied to a place, as if uprooted it might no longer be innovative. Thus, highlighting how a social innovations are closely

linked to the spatio-temporal dimension of where they happen. They exist many and different examples of social innovation where activities converged together in a creative way to become collaborative ones. All Social Innovations have a common denominator: they are the expression of radical changes on a local scale. And they arise from new ways of seeing traditional ways of living and doing things and introduce new ones, aimed to be more sustainable and to achieve social goals. Such as the organisation of advanced systems of sharing spaces or equipment. Social innovations are not defined as ‘innovations’ only for their ability to achieve a social purpose, but also for their ability to create social bonds. Indeed, social innovations, has the outstanding capacity of bringing together individual interests in line with social and environmental one, but even more they generate more sustainable ideas of well-being. One of the founding values of this welfare is the idea of “commons”: to caring attitude, to collaborative actions, new forms of community and new ideas of locality. Therefore, social innovations are those kind of innovations where people have been able to converge their personal needs and individual behaviour into a more sustainable and shared view.

Social innovations are usually distributed systems, where an idea of vertical hierarchy is abandoned in favour of an horizontal one, and resilient. By resilient, we refer to a society that is open to creativity and diversification, where it is possible to reconcile nature and man, as well as man and the complexity of the world we live in.



However, social innovations and their achievements are extremely complex systems, and as such their quality depends on their configuration and variety of motivations. Hence, small organisations are usually preferred as they are closer to the local community and consequently more open and understanding. In such cases, the close connection and relationship between the different components of the organisation leads to greater and more positive results, as well as allowing the social organisation to be grounded within a specific environment. However, being constantly exposed to a large amount of data and connections, as mentioned earlier, creates a balance between the local and the global, generating what is referred to as the 'Cosmopolitan Localism' (Manzini, 2015). Thus giving these realities the chance not to be isolated, but to be part of a wider network, where local takes on a new meaning.

**CREATIVE COMMUNITIES:  
AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION**

Meroni (2007) describe a particular kind of social innovation, made up of people who have decided to actively cooperate, invent and manage innovative solutions of new ways of living as Creative Communities. The main characteristic of these communities is that they arise from everyday life problems, which by applying their creativity break mainstream thinking patterns and generate new ways of life. These communities require three indispensable factors to grow: the existence of traditions, the possibility of using a

set of services and infrastructure, and the existence of social and political conditions conducive to the development of widespread creativity. Speaking of traditions means precisely a heritage of knowledge, behavioral patterns and organizational forms that enable the creation of a valuable and solid foundation for the future. Creative communities, during the innovation process, can evolve into more mature organisation with the possibility of becoming a diffused social enterprises, this is a key data in understanding their ability to endure over time and push into new contexts. Diffused social enterprises are groups of people who, in the everyday life, organise themselves to actively achieve results necessary for their daily living. The activities of these organisations have a side effect of reinforcing the social fabric and improving environmental quality, thus they create sociality.

Specific features of these enterprises, is that they consist of groups of people who collaborate with each other in order to create shared values. Thus, being collaborative relationships, they are based on a high level of mutual trust, which is fundamental to the functioning of the organisation.

In this system, unlike a traditional enterprise where one person in charge serves another, everyone is actively involved in achieving a common result through an organizational model that moves beyond traditional dualities like public-private and customer-producer. Converging private, social, and environmental issues driven by a complex mix of needs and wishes.



**Manzini and Jégou (2008) outlined different kind of organisations that generates from diffused social enterprise: collaborative services, collaborative enterprises, collaborative citizens and participative institutions.**

<b>COLLABORATIVE SERVICES</b>	social services where users are actively involve and assume the role of service co-designers and co-producers. (eg. sharing houses)
<b>ELECTIVE COMMUNITY</b>	a particular small and medium sized circles of people organised to provide mutual help and interested in exchanging local services and goods. Typical examples of these circles are organised trading systems which exchange labor based upon time spent; people in the same neighbourhood involved in the cleaning, maintenance and improvement of its living conditions; larger networks exchanging second hand books and organising discussion groups on line between readers. Elective communities are a middle ground between the trust building, personal relationships and spontaneous exchanges that take place because of close physical proximity; and the chosen affinity resulting from a common interest, convergence of views or objectives. Beyond family and friends, they constitute additional layers of the social fabric that provide tangible services, but also a strong feeling of belonging, identity and support.
<b>COLLABORATIVE ENTERPRISES</b>	entrepreneurial production and service initiatives that enhance new models of locally-based activities encouraging direct relationship with users and consumers, who become as well co-producers. (eg. farm where to discover biodiversity values and local production)
<b>COLLABORATIVE CITIZENS</b>	group of people who actively collaborate to solve problems or open new possibilities, and again become co-producer of the final outcome. (eg. community garden)
<b>PARTICIPATIVE INSTITUTIONS</b>	larger institutions operating on a local scale with an extensive participation of interested people. (eg. customise nursery)



Creative communities and collaborative organisations are often described as bottom-up initiatives, although we can see that often for their maintenance over time or even the first step, they are helped by the exchange of information with similar organisations. However, they can be considered bottom-up because of the active participation of the people involved. Consequently, their initiation, day-to-day life and possible improvement in the future is a complex system of bottom-up, top-down and peer-to-peer interactions. This context explains how these interactions cannot be planned, as they are extremely complex socio-technical systems, but can be woven to create fertile ground for creative initiatives and the rise of collaborative organisations. Two approaches can be taken in the case of creative communities by designers: designing in creative communities or for creative communities. Where the first one stands for facilitating the alignment of different partners into a shared value (promoting collaboration among different actors) and the other means looking at different typology of collaboration, understanding the strength and weaknesses, to then improve and replicate them. Hence, what is the precise position of design and the designer in

the more general context of Social Innovations?

#### THE ROLE OF DESIGN AND DESIGNERS IN SOCIAL INNOVATION

As we have previously discussed, nowadays, design plays an essential role in activating and supporting social innovations; therefore, we can talk about Design for Social Innovations. However, this is not a new design discipline but rather a new approach, and consequently a form in which today's design manifests itself. Previously it was noted how social innovations, developed by creative communities, can turn into more complex structures such as social enterprises. For this transformation to take place the role of design is crucial, in fact it is the design expert who notices the core social innovation, putting into action a series of methods and skills, and then strengthening and transforming them into a more developed, desired, long-lasting system that can be replicated. This last point stands out since one of the main purposes of design for social innovations is precisely that: its ability to take a single action out of its context and adapt it to a new promising situation.



Design for social innovations is characterised by a strong critical, cultural and creative dimension, without which it can hardly develop. This dimension is strongly influenced by what Manzini defines as 'social heroes', i.e. those figures with great charisma and energy who are willing to take action to achieve positive and radical change. This dimension is then linked to the strategic one, which allows design to last over time and be part of a broader vision. Within this context the role of the designer has never been more blurred, yet so important. Indeed, it is crucial not to reduce the role of the design expert to a simple facilitator role, although this latter position is very important in the collaborative process. The designer is a specialist trained to use their creativity to transform ideas into real, tangible propositions. If the designer's way of operating is not understood and respected, multiple problems may arise during the process. Therefore it is important that the different activities and initiatives proposed by the expert are well defined in their modalities, time and purpose. Queste iniziative, sebbene risultino come il risultato

del lavoro realizzato da un gruppo di attori, non nascono per caso, ma sono progettate dallo stesso designer. As mentioned above being strategic is a design ability and peculiarity. Consequently, this confirms the importance of an expert in the design of social innovations. To conclude, designers need to re-think their place in the society and their way of operating. They have the growing responsibility of feeding people and communities with their creative capabilities and sensibility from their own culture and experience, collaborating with a variety of interlocutors con cui stabilire una "dialogic cooperation" (Manzini, 2015). Lastly, designers must be critical, creative and dialogical, to avoid appearing authoritarian and arrogant. Therefore, they must use their creativity and culture as a tool to support the design capacity and dialogue between the different actors. Briefly, they have to make things happen, acknowledge people's feedback and redirect the action (Manzini, 2014).





# Design for Place-making

Coming back to the concept of a liquid society, presented in the introduction to the chapter, we could say that in the solid world there were daily interactions among residents of a community, who shared daily space and time in an evident and natural way. These practices in the liquid world have been lost, due to the hyper-communication we are exposed to every day, which also takes place between people far away from each other, thus losing that idea of proximity and causing the physical space between them to lose value. However, it is possible for people who share a space to start a conversation and decide to do something in it together. By doing so, they become a place-making community by choice.

In the field of design, this emerging process of “inventing space” (Meroni and Selloni, 2023) is referred to as Place-making. Where

by place is meant an idea of locality linked to the relationship of people with a specific space (place-attachment) and by making, on the other hand, those actions realised by people experience that place. The connection of the two words, and thus the ultimate aim of place-making, is to improve the perception of well-being, given a group of people, in a certain place. Place-making working in close contact with people’s behaviour in relation to the environment in which they live, is an extremely important discipline for sustainable development (both in the social and environmental sphere) as well as a transdisciplinary one.

It was initially named in 1960 with a research in the field of architecture, and in particular with a critique of the new urban planning that failed in giving the right importance to citizens and their way of living the spaces of the city.



**“A PLACE IS A SPACE ENDOWED WITH SENSE. IT IS A SPACE THAT IS MEANINGFUL FOR SOMEONE. IN VIEW OF THIS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT FOR A PLACE TO EXIST THERE MUST BE A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT IT AND ACT IN IT.”**

*[Manzini, 2015]*

## THE ESSENCE OF PLACE-MAKING

Since the essence of Place-making is to give a sense of place, i.e. to build a space in which people identify with it and inspire a sense of belonging (Loh et Al., 2022), it is important to include citizens and stakeholders from the earliest stages of the project, with a strong focus on the values, needs and desire of the people. Indeed, it is precisely this integration of people living in a space into the creative process that creates a common vision of the space and makes place-making an outstanding discipline nowadays. However, place-making is not precluded to be a bottom-up initiative, indeed it may be the designer himself who chooses to develop projects on a more local scale, developing systems where local culture and production live balanced in respect of the territory. In this context, designers collaborate with different local actors such as public entities, residents, institutions, etc. with

the ultimate goal of developing projects aimed at regeneration on a territorial dimension.

Place-making, for the design discipline, is an important step forward, an area where both problem-solving and sense-making dimensions coincide (Manzini, 2015)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE-MAKING

Why is talking about place-making important in the contemporary context? Recognising the value of a place means developing a new idea of well-being, as well as being fundamental to the people who live there. (Manzini, 2015) This seeking for well-being is what drives place-making the most.

Although Place Making is a transdisciplinary discipline whose roots can be found in architecture, psychology, sociology, etc., it is



also a discipline of design. Design can bring a number of key competencies to the Place-making approach such as its being a collaborative, a people-centred discipline and its ability to reimagine space to transform it into a meaningful place for people [Meroni and Selloni, 2023].

When it comes to places and the wellbeing of a community/ individuals, it is important to talk about resilience, i.e. the ability of a given system to adapt to unforeseen events and last over time. Resilience is a technical characteristic that is indispensable for a society to be sustainable.

Moreover, when collaborative organisations work together as place-makers, they not only contribute to the idea of 'place', its resilience and sustainability, but also to the idea of territory. Territory is defined as a set of places and communities living in it;

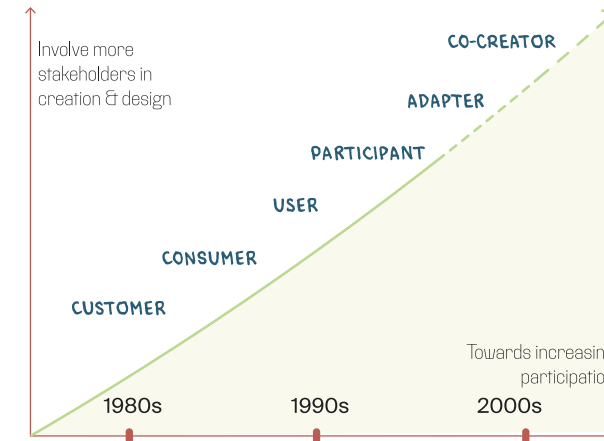
the richer this territory is in terms of diversity of activities, places, residents, etc., the more sustainable development is achieved. Therefore we could say that acting place-making is a promising way to regenerate territory.



# Participatory Design

## FROM DESIGNING FOR USERS TO DESIGNING WITH USERS

Beginning in the 1980s there was a shift among certain industries in understanding the potential role of users in the design process itself and they began to realise that the customers themselves



**“HOW CAN WE GATHER AND COLLABORATE IN AND AROUND DESIGN THINGS—THINGS THAT ARE MODIFYING THE SPACE OF INTERACTIONS AND PERFORMANCE AND THAT MAY BE EXPLORED AS SOCIO-MATERIAL FRAMES FOR CONTROVERSIES, OPENING UP NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND BEHAVING, BEING READY FOR UNEXPECTED USE?”**

*[Ehn, 2012]*

could be the key to creating better services, starting by understanding their needs. This was the beginning of an approach that went from designing for users to designing with users, who themselves eventually became co-creators and no longer mere end users [Fuad-Luke, 2009].

Fig. 30 The shift from customers to co-creators. Source: Fuad-Luke (2009). Design by the author



Nowadays, this particular approach is known as Participatory design and stands for a collaborative approach to the design of products, services, spaces or systems that includes a range of stakeholders in the creative process. Consequently, people involved in this methodology are invited to participate in the design phase and the decision-making process that concerns them, thus impacting the final design outcome. Participatory design is an approach based on creative collaboration among different actors involved in the process, such as producers, designers and end users, leading to more effective, appropriate and desirable outcomes.

As a human activity, one of the key features of design has always been to be linked to the social dimension, involving different actors and disciplines. In this sense, participatory design triggers people to become active givers, thus incorporating the ideal of mutual support and the notion of collectivity (Fuad-Luke, 2009).

The idea at the core of Participatory Design is that the consumer who uses the end product is entitled and expected to define how this product is created. Furthermore, by involving a diverse type of actors and stakeholders in its creation the product seems to be more effective. Overall, co-design criticises the top-down approach and favours a bottom-up decision-making system. (Fuad-Luke, 2009)

Lastly, Participatory design stands to be a democratic, open process that in general helps sensitise designers in a defined context, and to frame key aspects of the situation that presents design challenges and opportunities.

#### THE SCANDINAVIAN ROOTS OF PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participatory design has its roots in the labor democratization movements in Scandinavian countries. In the 1970s, participation and joint decision-making became important factors in relation to workplaces and the introduction of new technologies. The primary goal was democratising workspace design, ensuring involvement of trade unions in creating systems impacting their members. Key projects included the NIMP project in Norway, the Swedish DEMOS project, and the Danish DUE project. Trade union representatives collaborated with management and technical designers to understand and negotiate the use of new technologies.

An important contribution to the Scandinavian approach to participatory design is due to Professor Pelle Ehn and his Malmö Living Labs research team. The team's work is based on the design thinking pursued by Ehn: moving from creating simple "things" or objects to viewing things as complex assemblages of social and material elements, emphasizing the nuanced complexities and expanded scope of participatory design. Through their



innovative work in Malmö's Living Labs, Ehn and his team embody the theoretical shift toward involving stakeholders not only as participants in the design process but as co-designers, envisioning the use of projects before their actual use and also considering the life cycle of projects beyond the initial design.

In the 90s the methodology expanded to the United States and was applied to a broader range of design challenges beyond the workplace. The focus shifted from its original political and philosophical roots to a more commercial context. The approach was used to quickly develop products, environments, or services that were desirable to end users and aligned with organisational capabilities.

More recently, participatory design has also been used to effect changes in organisational cultures. In these scenarios, the methods support solutions originating from the organisation's members, or the users themselves, with practitioners primarily providing process support.

#### PROCESS & TOOLS

Over time, a set of common methodologies, tools and processes have emerged to foster group ideation, communication and collaboration. Whom are more commonly referred to as Co-design activities, a term that encompasses the several aspects

and practices aimed at active participation. These processes are characterised by being highly dynamic processes, creative and productive (Manzini, 2015).

In the case of the Scandinavian approach to participatory design, Ehn (1988) suggests how the dialogue between designers and the users for whom they design could be seen as the encounter of language games (Björgvinsson, 2007). In this context, "performative" design elements such as prototypes and "design games" take the role of "boundary objects" used to connect these different language games. The idea is to construct the design process as a collection of these language games. According to Ehn (2008), this perspective led to the creation of a socio-material design object in collaboration with project participants. A crucial shift has been from traditional "systems descriptions" to more engaging and practical design tools, such as mock-ups, prototypes, and organizational games.

Collaborative design sessions are particularly crucial, involving group work sessions that bring project participants together to reflect, prioritise, and collaborate to define solutions. They usually include collaborative design sessions (or future workshops), scenario prototyping, rapid prototypes, mockups, and contextual inquiry.



Depending on the desired outcome, one can opt for one type of event rather than another: led by a designer, by a non-designer, in a public or private venue or by the number of participants. There are different ways of organising co-design sessions, but the planning of the event is crucial, its success depends largely on the organisation phase. Some of the key steps to be taken into account when planning a co-design activity can be listed. It is important to define the roles of coordinators in advance, such as the chairperson, the facilitator and a number of helpers (specialised or not). Depending on the scale of the event, there could be one or more facilitator as well as helpers. The role of the

facilitator is usually done by a designer. This is the main and most important role and usually holds key activities such as trying to include the participants, listening to them, communicating and explaining the event in the best possible way, keeping time for the activities and finally concluding the event by summarising the work done and what was achieved. In addition to defining the type of event, it is crucial to understand what the aim of the event is and which participants should be involved. Finally, all practicalities, including location of the event, time, costs and rewards for participants are to be defined.

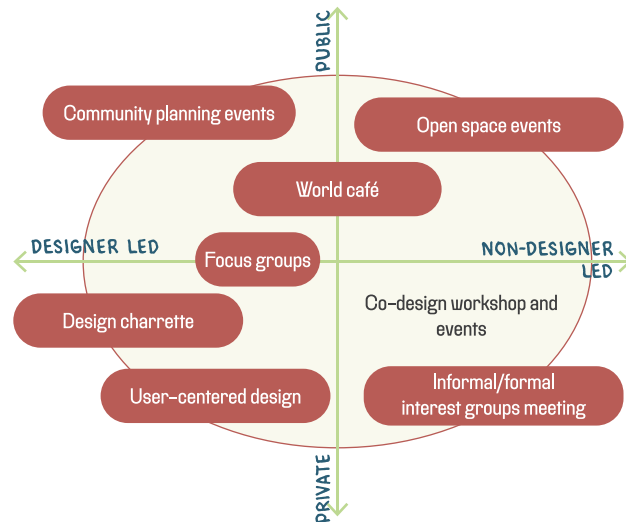


Fig. 31 Co-design events, designer-led to non-designer-led. Source: Fuad-Luke (2009). Design by the author

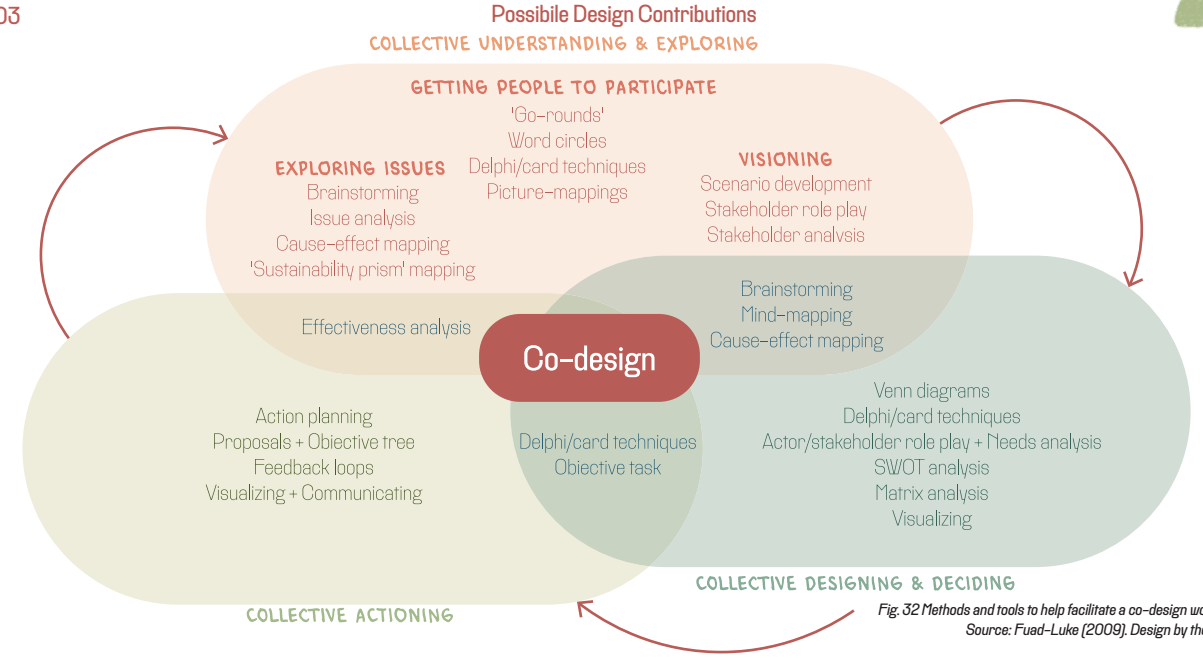


Fig. 32 Methods and tools to help facilitate a co-design workshop. Source: Fuad-Luke (2009). Design by the author

Furthermore, as well as defining the step of the event, is important to choose the appropriate technique for the right part of the session. One of the technique frequently use during the co-design session is the “scenario building” or the acting by the participants of different situations that could be implemented in the design. Rapid prototypes and mockups allows participants to quickly validate rough versions of the possible solution. In the explore phase is usually a good practice to have text and visual tools as well as outputs. Word circles are a good way to enhance participation in between participants, in early stage, since create a sense of collective of the idea outlined. Mind-mapping and cards are also very used prompt. There are different techniques and tools that can be applied in participatory design depending on the situation or the desired outcome.

Nevertheless, there are some typical characteristics of co-design, defined as soft systems methodologies by Broadbent (2003):

- Co-design is an interactive process
- being action-based research
- Involving top-down and bottom-up initiatives
- being useful for complex systems
- being situation driven
- satisfying multi-outcomes
- being absorbed by the system

For the success of a co-design session, it is advisable to implement a series of measurements such as keeping actions simple, letting people know what is expected of them, having good communication, and, finally, organising follow-up events to track the project's progress.



# Design Activism

We live in a world in extreme turbulence. A world dominated by social inequalities and injustices, stress on environmental resources, and driven by purely commercial interests aimed at the economic advancement of one. There is an urgent need for a de-growth action (Daly, 1999), to slow down the economy and devote to social and environmental values. In this view, as designers and inhabitants of this world, we need to re-evaluate our perspectives, split the previous close bond with business and find a balance between what happens here and now and what will happen in the future, aspiring to new and multiple roles in society including facilitators, authors, co-creators and happeners (Fuad-Luke, 2009).

This challenge and new responsibilities can find place in a design movement defined by researchers as Design Activism. A movement that seeks alternatives to current models starting

with social, environmental and political issues through the development of new processes and artifacts (Julier, 2013).

## IN BETWEEN TWO TERMS: THE DEFINITION OF DESIGN ACTIVISM

In order to understand the meaning of Design Activism and its role in the contemporary scenario, we must first define Design and Activism as distinct and settling concepts.

Design is a constantly evolving discipline, which is why it is difficult to define it in a single, authoritative definition. Nevertheless, some recurring characteristics can be outlined: such as being a discipline that navigates through different sectors and actors. Where one of its major peculiarities is to work within complex systems that allow it to deal with social and environmental issues typical of our contemporary times, thus making it a cornerstone in understanding issues and dynamics of today's life. On the



basis of this, and in particular on the speculations brought forth by Simon and Papanek in the early 1970s' on the role of design in understanding social and environmental issues, design can be defined as:

**“DESIGN IS THE ACT OF DELIBERATELY MOVING FROM AN EXISTING SITUATION TO A PREFERRED ONE BY PROFESSIONAL DESIGNERS OR OTHERS APPLYING DESIGN KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWINGLY.”**

*(Fuad-Luke, 2009, pag5)*

On the other hand, activism, or rather activists (i.e., those who carry out activism), reconnect with this definition as they usually are part of social, environmental and social, local or distributed movements that are based on collective and/or individual practices. In essence, activists, as well as designers, are agents of change toward a better world perspective. This change, which means moving from state A to state B, implies a transformation in the system and targets a specific audience of people.

Both Activists and Designers, and consequently Design Activists, are driven by needs, desires and goals that may be personal or altruistic, the main concern is defining their goal and the intention to achieve it through a series of actions. As such, by taking the role of “change agents,” they have the power to influence the behaviour of others. However, transformed activism may occur, where the activist and the object of their action become a personal goal. Being an activist is thus part of a personal, life-developing journey not only for the community, but for oneself.

Based on such considerations, therefore, an initial definition of “Design Activism” can be established:

**“DESIGN ACTIVISM IS DESIGN THINKING, IMAGINATION AND PRACTICE APPLIED KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWINGLY TO CREATE A COUNTER-NARRATIVE AIMED AT GENERATING AND BALANCING POSITIVE SOCIAL, INSTITUTIONAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND/OR ECONOMIC CHANGE.”**

*(Fuad-Luke, 2009, p.27)*

**THE TERRITORY OF DESIGN ACTIVISM**

In his book, *Design Activism: Beautiful Strangeness for Sustainable World*, scholar Alastair Fuad-Luke, defines the working ground of the design activist and the possible dimensions of this discipline. Specifically, he illustrates the “Five Capitals” in which design activism can operate and contribute in different manners to environmental and social sustainability.

The 5 capitals, natural, human, social, manufactured and economic, are the locus of action for the design activist who takes the role of regulator of flows within these. From these capitals additional capitals arise and develop (eg. alternative economies, environmentalist, end-of-life, etc.), from which in turn new relationships are generated that give rise to different design approaches (collaborative design, eco-design, gender design, etc.). This occurs because design approaches can be applied to different, but specific, disciplines, and likewise we can say that each design approach contains specific features to address

contemporary issues. Consequently, many design approaches are issue-led since they seek to solve existing and relevant problems in nowadays society (Fuad-Luke, 2009). As such, we can say that the main challenge in design over the past decades has been that of Sustainability, understood as:

**“POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT REFERS TO PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT THAT ACHIEVES NET POSITIVE IMPACTS DURING ITS LIFE CYCLE OVER PRE-DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS BY INCREASING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CAPITAL.”**

*[Birkeland, 2008]*

Eventually, this definition reveals how design can play a leading role in directing the 5 capitals and achieve a positive impact on the economic, social and ecological ones.



**“WE NEED NEW VISIONS OF BEAUTY – WE COULD CALL THIS BEAUTY, ‘BEAUTIFUL STRANGENESS’, A BEAUTY THAT IS NOT QUITE FAMILIAR, TINGED WITH NEWNESS, AMBIGUITY AND INTRIGUE, WHICH APPEALS TO OUR INNATE SENSE OF CURIOSITY ... BEAUTY THAT IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP, BEAUTY THAT IS ENVISIONED BY SOCIETY, BECAUSE THE CURRENT VERSION OF BEAUTY IS LARGELY ORDAINED BY BIG BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENTS. WE NEED A BEAUTY THAT SERVES ALL IN SOCIETY, HEALING SOCIETY’S DIVIDES (AROUND WEALTH, HEALTH, EDUCATION, ACCESS TO DIGITAL AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES). WE NEED A BEAUTY THAT WE CAN ADAPT AS FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE.”**

*[Fuad-Luke, 2009, p.188]*

**A NEW BEAUTY**

What Fuad-Luke want to tell us, is the urge of a new design narrative. For years, classical design culture made itself representative of the liberalism economy, supporting and promoting it through the production and consumption of objects and services whose main goal was to gain competitive advantages. (Julier, 2013)

Design activism, while maintaining its pragmatic side by designing artefacts that happen in a specific place and time, addresses design in “everyday” contexts with real people and places. Where

it is not necessarily needed to draw the final product, but rather guides that can then be implemented by others.

Finally, Design activism is a discipline that becomes a voice for choices and raises crucial questions for the modern world, thus taking a key role in today’s landscape (Julier, 2013). It reconsiders today’s paradigms by reevaluating resources, rethinking systems, proposing alternative models, and creating new groups of people and artefacts that enable democratic participation within the design process.



# DOUGH

## IDEATION



#### 4. GOOD PRACTICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

#### 5. THE BAKERY

#### 6. CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS

The phase of ideation is dedicated to transforming insights gathered from research into actionable ideas. A distinctive feature of service design lies in its approach to design alongside people, making them active contributors to the design process. At this juncture, the advantages of co-design are particularly evident (Foglieni et Al., 2018).

Thus, this second phase delves into the core values of the project and examples of best practices where these principles have been effectively applied. A preliminary concept was developed and subsequently shared with residents, tourists and administrators in the valley. Co-design sessions, organized with the aim of refining the bakery model so that it would best meet the needs of the local community, played a key role in the ideation process.



04.

# GOOD PRACTICES



Fig. 33 Guillot-Moueix, B. (2022). View from outside of the Cooperative bakery in Uzeste, Le Monde.

Retrieved from: [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/hou-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread\\_6993706\\_183.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/hou-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread_6993706_183.html)

## Introduction

The following chapter presents the three fundamental pillars on which the project stands, as the result of an intensive research and territorial analysis process. Through this investigation, crucial values, found to be central to the development of La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery, have been outlined.

These interconnected and indispensable pillars are: **The Community, The Protection of the Territory** and **A New Economy**. However, these three axes are not only the foundation of the project, but also represent the dimensions of its sustainability: social, environmental and economic. Thus giving the project a radical sustainability dimension (Synthesis Lab, 2019).

Each of these axes is manifested through a series of case studies, selected for their significance and impact in the context of the project.

### COMMUNITY

Represents the first axis, emphasizing the importance of inclusion and active involvement of local citizens in the realization of shared goals. This axis underlines the value of collaboration, seeing the community not only as the ultimate beneficiary, but as an integral and active part of the project process.

### PROTECTION OF THE TERRITORY

Constitutes the second pillar, reflecting a commitment to conservation and respect for the surrounding natural environment. This axis incorporates projects that aim to protect the landscape and promote sustainable practices, highlighting the importance of a balanced relationship between human activities and the ecosystem.

### A NEW ECONOMY

A New Economy is the third and final axis, proposing an innovative and sustainable economic model, often facilitated by synergistic interaction with the other two axes: community and environmental protection. This axis explores new approaches to an economy that values sustainability, creating a balance between economic progress, social responsibility and environmental protection.

Finally, a fourth category of case studies is presented. The projects highlighted in this category, take a place in their own right and are not included in some of the previous 3 pillars, as they are examples arising from broader regenerative actions. Hence, they are examples of associations, workshops or creative studios working in the field of rural regeneration in a wider sense.





# The core values of the project

The three core values on which the project stands, are the result of an intensive territorial research and analysis phase presented in the previous section (see Background Knowledge), and represent the cornerstones on which the entire development of La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery rests.

Moreover, through the territorial exploration, these three crucial values were identified and considered essential for the success and coherence of the project itself.

These pillars, closely interconnected and indispensable to each other, are The Community, The Protection of the Territory and A New Economy. They not only form the cornerstones on which the project is based, but also reflect the various dimensions of its social, environmental and economic sustainability.

These dimensions, when combined, enable the project to achieve radical sustainability (PSSD Synthesis Lab, 2022). In other words, a complete sustainability that is based on the integration of social innovations (see Chapter 3) and the circular economy. Thus, this approach puts both social and environmental value at the center, allowing design to become sincerely revolutionary (Papaneke, 1971).

**“DESIGN, IF IT IS TO BE ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIVE, MUST BE REVOLUTIONARY AND RADICAL.”**

*[Papaneke, 1971]*

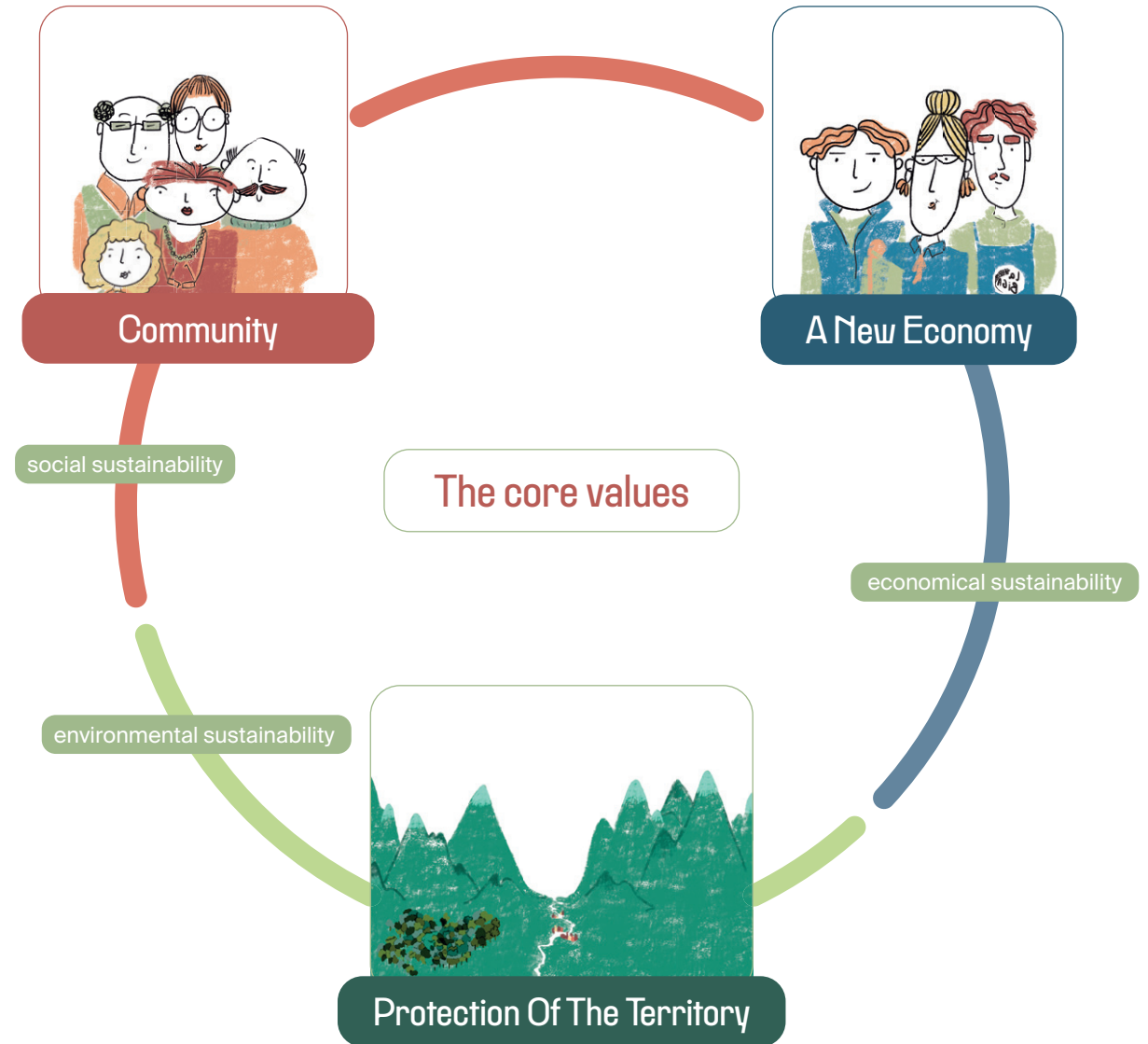


Fig. 34 Graph illustrating the values of the project  
Design by the author



# Community

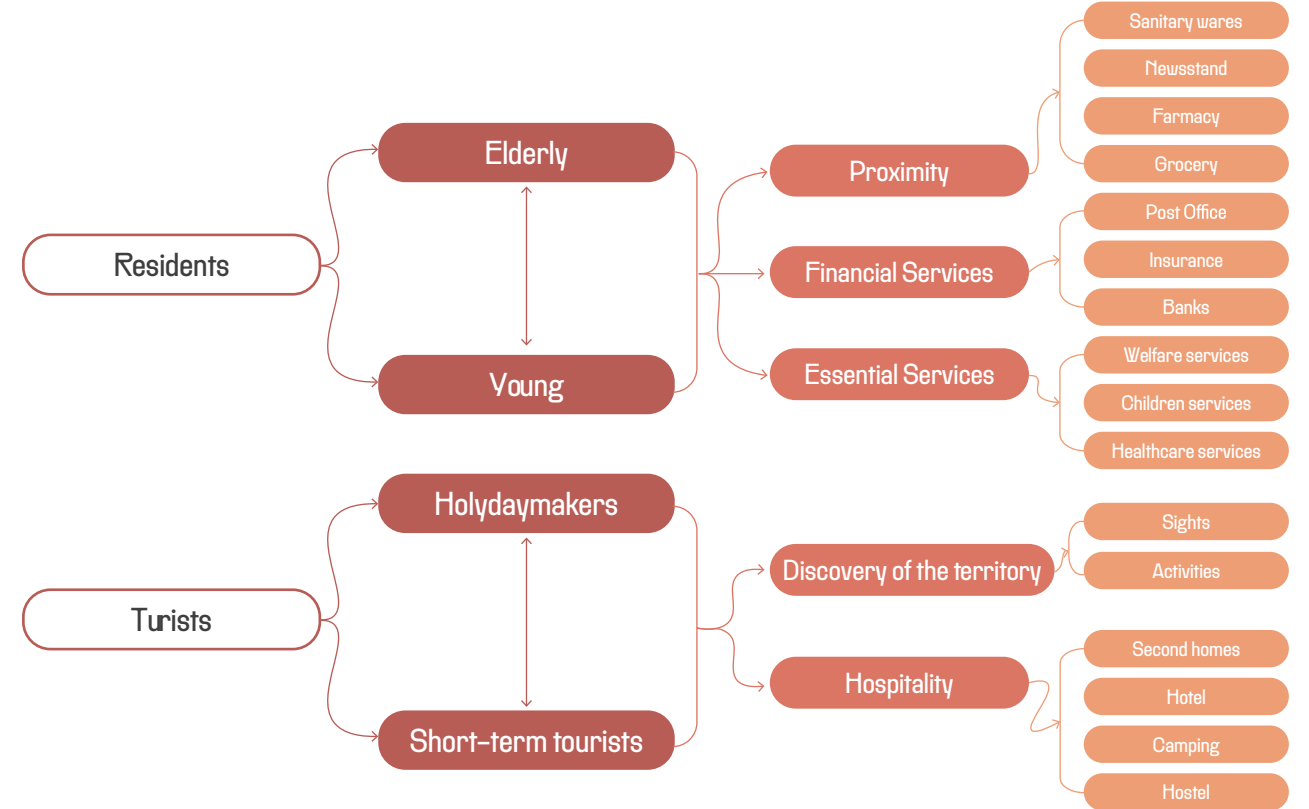


The Community axis stands as the core of the project, highlighting the importance of inclusion and active engagement of local citizens and visitors in the implementation of shared goals. This pillar deeply emphasizes the concept of collaboration, proposing a vision of the community not merely as the final beneficiary of the initiatives, but as a vital and proactive force within the creative and implementation process.

The community is composed of a dynamic and complex social fabric, the main actors being residents and tourists, each carrying different but intrinsically connected needs and perspectives. However, this division expands further into the subcategories of Youth and Seniors, regarding residents, and Villagers and Short Tourists, for visitors.

Having a distinction between these categories allows for an accurate mapping of various needs, both in terms of services

and entertainment opportunities, creating a detailed picture that facilitates the design of inclusive and welcoming solutions for all. A key element in this cornerstone is the interaction and bonding between different sub-themes. Constant communication between residents and tourists, as well as between generations, young and old, becomes an engine for mutual growth and enrichment. This continuous exchange of ideas, experiences and expectations helps shape a resilient community, capable of adapting and thriving in the face of challenges, while valuing diversity as a key resource.



To summarize, the Community axis aims to build a robust and interconnected social infrastructure where every individual, regardless of background or age, can feel part of a greater whole, working together toward the collective well-being and enrichment of the community fabric.

Fig. 35 Graph illustrating the Community Value in detail. Design by the author



# WONDERGROTTOLE



“A LABORATORY-VILLAGE WHERE IT IS POSSIBLE TO TEST PILOT PROJECTS OF REGENERATION OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE, MARKED BY THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LOCAL COMMUNITY AND EXTERNAL ENERGIES.”

*(Wondergrottole website)*

Fig.36 Aerial View of Grottole. Retrieved: <https://www.wondergrottole.it>

**WHERE** Grottole, Basilicata, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Silvio Donadio, Valentina La Terza, Andrea Paoletti and Viviana Bassan, 2018

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Exploratory walk
- Mapping
- Uninhabited buildings
- Involvement of the local community
- Regeneration experiments
- Historical, cultural and natural heritage
- Concept of “temporary residents”
- Volunteers
- Renovation project
- Local and international contexts

**WHAT** Wonder Grottole aims to revitalize Grottole’s historic center in Basilicata by refurbishing abandoned homes and drawing in new creative energies. This initiative strives to invigorate the village with innovative ideas and opportunities, enhancing local morale and economic activity. With only 300 inhabitants and over 600 vacant buildings, Grottole faces challenges of depopulation. Originating from a 2013 exploratory walk by Casa Natural, the project has mapped deserted buildings and engaged with the local community, turning Grottole into a regeneration “laboratory” that blends architectural and cultural renewal, fostering connections between



Fig.37 A lady preparing fresh pasta. Retrieved: <https://www.wondergrottole.it>

locals and newcomers. Focusing on housing, agriculture, business, and tourism, Wonder Grottole integrates local products and celebrates the area’s natural and historical assets. It reimagines tourism as an immersive experience, where visitors contribute to village life, sharing skills with the community. The project introduced “temporary residents” through a collaboration with Airbnb in 2019, inviting five volunteers to help renovate Grottole for three months, drawing global attention and attracting 280,000 applications, thereby linking local and international efforts for community integration and development.



# ROBIDA COLLECTIVE



Fig.36 Academy of Margins (2023). Retrieved: <https://robidacollective.com/projects/academy-of-margins>

“HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN A VILLAGE, AS IF IT WAS YOUR HOUSE? HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED IN THE WOODS, AS IF THEY WERE YOUR GARDEN?”

*[Robida collective website]*

**WHAT** Robida is an artistic and cultural collective that operates in the village of Topolò. Since 2015, the collective has published Robida Magazine annually, a multilingual cultural magazine that reflects on themes related to the Topolò context, such as abandonment and the relationship between domestic and wild. In 2021, Robida opened a community space: Izba, a small coworking and hospitality space. In 2022,

**WHERE** Topolò, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Collective founded in 2015

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Radio and Magazine touchpoint
- Co-working and community space
- Hospitality space
- Art residencies
- Summer school
- Intergenerational exchange
- Experiencing rural living
- Environmental awareness
- Inclusive community
- Laboratory for experimenting
- Connecting people
- Cultural work



Fig.39 Radio Robida. Retrieved: <https://robidacollective.com/projects/radio-robida>

they launched the Academy of Margins, a summer school aimed at facilitating encounters between theories of living in urban and marginal places, promoting an intergenerational exchange between reference authors and new generations through experimentation and the experience of living in a rural area.

Robida engages in long-term projects related to the Topolò landscape, enhancing the meaning of rural living, sustainability, environmental awareness, and building an inclusive community that transcends traditional dichotomies of modern living.

Robida presents itself as a platform for belonging, a laboratory for experimenting and a project for connecting people, whose main goal is to rethink cultural work in rural areas. These areas, overlooked by urbanization, offer new possibilities for rural-influenced cultural production, promoting sustainable and conscious outcomes. Robida advocates a future of municipalality, extending the notion of residence beyond the human and deconstructing traditional oppositions such as rural/urban and public/private.



# BOULANGERIE COOPÉRATIVE OF UZESTE



“FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE BAKERY IN UZESTE, A SMALL COMMUNE IN THE SOUTH OF GIRONDE, HAS BEEN CLOSED. TO REVIVE THE BUSINESS AND ENJOY FRESH, ORGANIC, LOCAL BREAD, LOCAL RESIDENTS HAVE JOINED FORCES TO FORM A COOPERATIVE.”

*[Krémer, 2022]*

*Fig.40 Guillot-Moueix, B. (2022). Inside the cooperative bakery of Uzeste, in Gironde. Le Monde. Retrieved: [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/how-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread\\_6993705\\_163.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/how-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread_6993705_163.html)*

**WHERE** Uzeste, Gironde, France

**WHO AND WHEN** Citizens of Uzeste, 2021

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
Cooperative bakery  
Collaboration  
Solidarity  
Local community  
Revival  
Renewal  
olunteerism

**WHAT** In the small village of Uzeste in southwest France, a collaborative initiative has been launched to save the local bakery.

In 2021, after years of repeated failure, 304 people from Uzeste and surrounding villages founded and operated the “Cooperative Bakery” together:

This unique bakery, decorated with multicolored flowers and furnished with tables and chairs, has become a gathering place for the local community. Its opening was made possible through the efforts of citizens from a variety of professions, including a lawyer, two bricklayers, a bookseller, a baker, and a former trade union member.



*Fig.41 Guillot-Moueix, B. (2022). Marion Duquesne making her bread at the cooperative bakery in Uzeste. Le Monde. Retrieved: [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/how-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread\\_6993705\\_163.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/16/how-france-s-bakery-deserts-are-getting-back-their-daily-bread_6993705_163.html)*

The bakery’s story goes beyond simply making bread and has become a symbol of solidarity and rebirth for the village.

Thanks to collaborative funding and help from local institutions, the bakery has been renovated and now offers a variety of products, including whole wheat bread, made with organic flours from local farms, and baguettes. About 20 volunteers take turns bringing wood to the bakery and serving customers, demonstrating the importance of cooperation and community in keeping alive an activity essential to village life. The bakery has proven to be an economic and social success, becoming an example for other rural villages facing similar problems related to the closure of local businesses.



# LA RIVOLUZIONE DELLE SEPPIE



“WE OPERATE IN THE VOIDS OF TERRITORIES, PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL, OCCUPYING SPACE AND TAKING ON ITS FORM. WE WANT TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY BY NURTURING IT THROUGH THE INTERCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE TO INHABIT A PLACE TEMPORARILY BUT CONSTANTLY. WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW MODEL OF LIVING AND WORKING COLLECTIVELY.”

*[Le Seppie statement]*

Fig. 42 Casa Belmondo. Retrieved: <https://larivoluzionedelleseppie.org>

**WHERE** Belmonte Calabro, Calabria, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Le Seppie (cultural association) and Orizzontale (architecture collective), 2019

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
New sense of belonging  
Non-formal experimentation  
Empty Spaces and Places of Dwelling.  
Meeting Place  
Construction of spaces  
Collaborative rooms  
Reactivation  
Cultural, artistic and social activities  
Citizenship participation  
Relationships  
Rediscovered spaces

**WHAT** BelMondo is a hybrid place in Belmonte that merges research, art, and architecture to enrich the local cultural and social landscape for marginalised places, fostering a new community belonging. Launched with the 2019 Crossings event by Orizzontale, Belmondo House became a hub for Seppie's work, supported by cross-disciplinary collaboration. The Seppie group worked to develop a strategic vision for the future development of Belmonte, transforming the second floor of the building into a space to accommodate community and research activities. The main theme of the



Fig. 43 Casa Belmondo. Retrieved: <https://larivoluzionedelleseppie.org>

project is the concept of “collaborative halls,” aiming to make the environment functional and an integral part of the permanent urban context for cultural, artistic and social activities. The artistic action during Crossings stimulated the interest of the local community and led to the active participation of citizens in the creation of a shared space. The collaborative work fostered the creation of new relationships and strengthened the bond with the citizenry, who feel involved as janitors and managers of these newfound spaces.

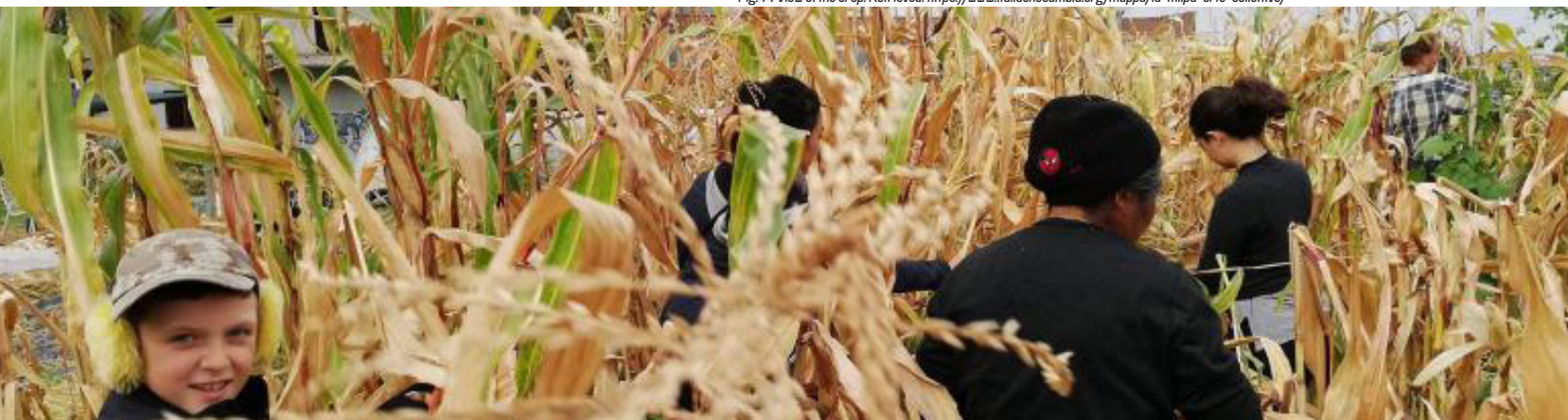


# LA MILPA ORTO COLLETTIVO

“THE MILPA IS A COMMUNITY GARDEN. ITS PECULIARITY? IT IS THAT OF BEING WITHOUT RULES! HERE PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER WITHOUT DIVISION OF SPACE, THERE ARE NO SET SCHEDULES, AND THEY LEARN FROM COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE. AND WHAT IS CULTIVATED IS DIVIDED NOT ACCORDING TO THE LABOR EMPLOYED BUT ACCORDING TO EVERYONE’S NEEDS. IT MAY SOUND INCREDIBLE, BUT THIS IS THE REAL SECRET OF ITS SUCCESS.”

*(Walter Vassallo, founder of la Milpa)*

Fig.44 View of the crop. Retrieved: <https://www.italiachecambia.org/mappa/la-milpa-orto-collettivo/>



**WHERE** Piasco, Piedmont, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Walter Vassallo, 2013

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

Permaculture

Self-consumption

Community

No rules

Self-control

Trust

Reciprocity

Seasonal planning

**WHAT**

La Milpa is an innovative community garden project located in Piasco, in the province of Cuneo. Unlike traditional vegetable gardens, La Milpa operates without fixed rules. Here, the main goal is to cultivate the land together, without division of space or time constraints, learning from collective experience. The uniqueness of this garden lies in the fact that the distribution of the produce grown is not according to the work done by each person, but according to the needs of each participant.

The term “milpa” comes from Náhuatl, the original language of the Aztec people, and indicates a complex Mesoamerican system of crop association that dates back

to the Neolithic period. In the culture of the Mayan people, you are one with the earth, a mother element that must be protected and cherished when cultivated.

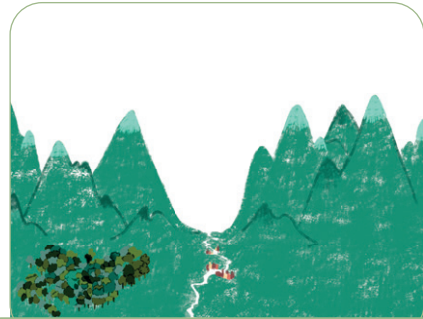
Milpa’s project offers its members the opportunity to collectively manage a 2,500-square-meter plot of land for self-consumption and to organize community meetings and festivals. Currently, about 30 people participate in managing the garden, growing mainly legumes, vegetables, small fruits and different varieties of corn.

The group follows permaculture principles in land management, avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides. The seeds used come from the members themselves or from informal exchanges, contributing to their independence from large seed companies.

Within the Milpa community, rules have been established based on self-control, trust and reciprocity. Members work in the garden as they are able and harvest what they need for their household, collaborating when possible. Garden design and seasonal planning are decided through meetings open to all members.



# Protection of the Territory



Protection Of The Territory

The Protection of the Territory, the project's second core value, highlights the vital need for sustainable and environmentally conscious management.

This is based on the premise that the well-being of communities and the future of the planet depend on the ability to maintain a balance between human needs and the conservation of natural ecosystems. Within this context, the pillar focuses on integrating innovative practices with traditional methods of safeguarding, creating a synergy that promotes environmental sustainability.

Consequently, within this axis, the opposition between the concepts of Innovation and Safeguarding reflects a dynamic approach to land protection that embraces technological and methodological innovations to address contemporary environmental challenges.

Innovation, in this context, is not seen as detached from tradition or preservation, but rather as a mean to achieve more effective and sustainable land management. Thus, it is about integrating new solutions and technologies to improve the quality of life without compromising the health and diversity of ecosystems.

Furthermore, the macro-theme of Proximity, within this category, underscores the importance of local connections and responsible management of common resources. As such, this concept is based on the idea that sustainable practices are rather more effective when they are rooted in the local reality and oriented toward the enhancement of territorial peculiarities. Proximity encourages local production and consumption, reducing the ecological footprint and strengthening the area's economy through short circuits and short supply chains.

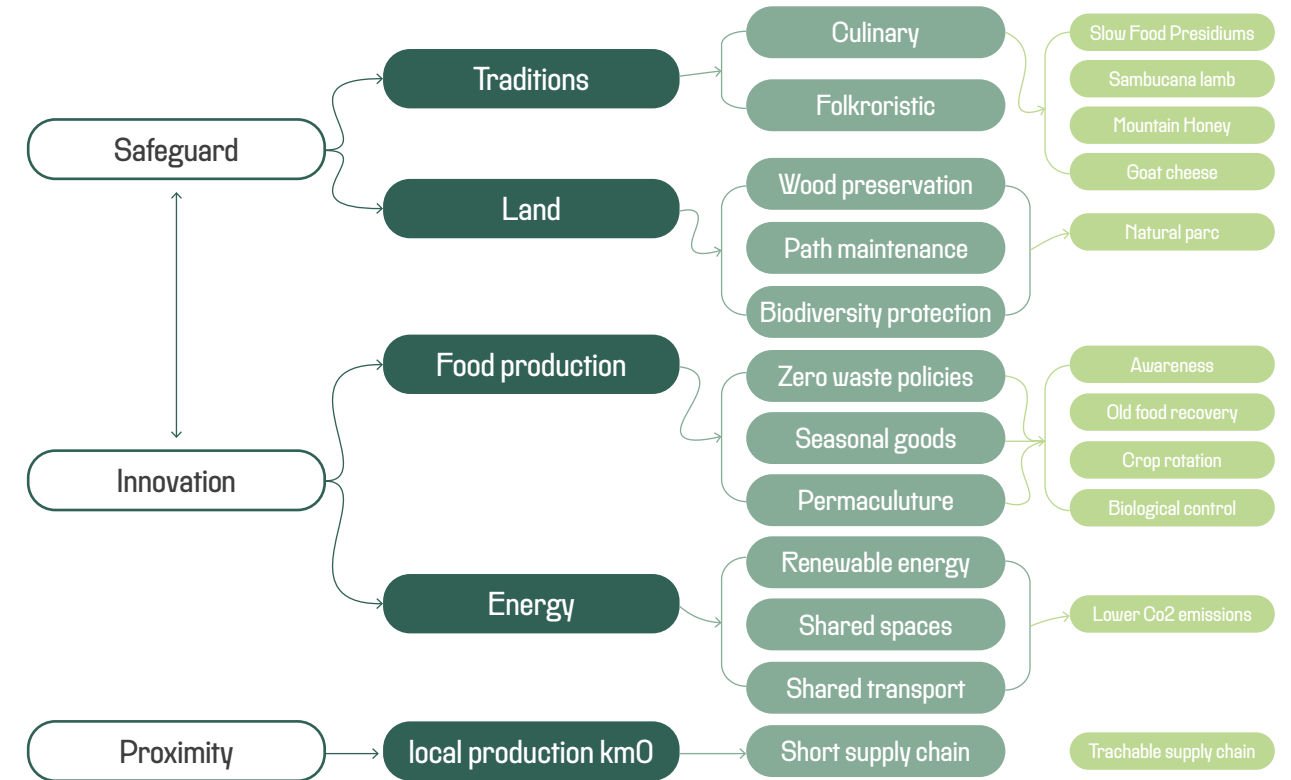


Fig. 45 Graph illustrating the Environmental Value in detail. Design by the author

Eventually, the dialogue between Innovation and Preservation, together with the principle of Proximity, invites deep reflection on how we can make the best use of the land, respecting its natural limits and promoting a culture of respect and care. This requires an ongoing commitment to researching and applying methodologies that enable balanced development, in which technological progress and environmental protection are mutually supportive to ensure a sustainable future.

In sum, Protection of the Territory proves to be a crucial pillar in ensuring the survival and well-being of present and future generations through the promotion of an ethic of responsibility and respect for the environment around us. It represents a call to act with awareness, valuing every effort aimed at preserving biodiversity and promoting a rather more balanced and sustainable relationship with our planet.





# LA CASA DEL PARCO DI ADAMELLO



“A PLACE OF COMMUNITY, MEETING AND DISCUSSION ON MOUNTAIN CULTURE, A SPACE FOR TERRITORIAL PROMOTION WHERE TO BUILD PATHS TO ENHANCE LOCAL POTENTIAL AND RESOURCES.”

*(Avanzi Milano)*

Fig. 46 Generatori di Cambiamento Workshop by Avanzi. Retrieved: <https://avanzi.org/generatori-di-cambiamento/>

**WHERE** Cevo, Val Savio, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Avanzi Discover, 2021

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Multifunctional space
- Cultural events
- Training
- Community of Desire
- Enhancement of the Territory
- Experimentation
- Development
- Meetings

**WHAT**

The Adamello Park House is a multifunctional place that offers a variety of indoor and outdoor services and activities. Inside, there is a kitchen, dining room, bedrooms, relaxation rooms, reading room, children’s space and workshop rooms. Outside, there is a large terrace and wide open space with mountain views. Next to the House, there is a deconsecrated church used for events and a large garden crossed by a path and stream. The Park House hosts cultural events, training sessions and workshops, with the aim of becoming a gathering place for a community with shared visions. But also to promote the area and to enhance mountain practices and knowledge through trainings and meetings with activists and residents.



Fig. 47 A lunch at la Casa del Parco di Adamello. Retrieved: <https://casadelparcoadamello.it>

The hostel inside can accommodate up to 44 people and has seen a significant number of overnight stays in the period from June to October 2022, resulting in the largest revenue and main activity for the operation of the House. The initiative is based on three pillars: explore, experience and meet. The goal is to draw new perspectives for the development of the area, involving the local community and institutions. It aims to create a “community of desire,” where people come together to address current challenges and experiment with new ways collectively.



# BORGATA PARALOUP

“PARALOUP, “SHELTERED FROM THE WOLVES”, IS AN ALPINE HAMLET. THE BORGATA HOME TO SHEPHERDS AND FLOCKS, DURING THE WAR, WAS A PLACE OF TRANSFORMATION FOR FARMERS, STUDENTS, AND ARTISANS FROM ALL PARTS OF ITALY, BECAME PARTISANS HERE AND DESCENDED INTO THE VALLEY TO FIGHT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ITALY FROM NAZI-FASCISM.”

*(Fondazione Nuto Revelli)*



**WHERE** Rittana, Piedmont, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Nuto Revelli Foundation, 2006

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

Reconstruction  
Sustainability  
Innovative architecture  
Use of local materials  
Solar energy  
Outdoor theater  
Revitalization of the area  
Integrated system of activities  
Open-air laboratory  
Historical memory

**WHAT** In 2006, the Nuto Revelli Foundation acquired and restored the long-abandoned hamlet of Paraloup. The goal was to transform it into a place that bears witness to the memory of the Resistance and rural mountain life, accessible to the community, schools and the public. The hamlet was rebuilt with an innovative and sustainable architectural approach, following the principles of the International Restoration Charter and using local materials crafted by local artisans. The use of solar energy and high-efficiency insulation made the hamlet environmentally friendly and sustainable. In addition, a 190-seat open-air theater



*Fig.49 View from the hamlet of Paraloup. Retrieved: <https://paraloup.it>*

was created for performances, meetings and workshops. The recovery of Paraloup has not only restored the village, but also contributed to the revalorization of the entire area, demonstrating the economic sustainability of an integrated system of tourist-cultural, agro-silvo-pastoral and artisanal activities. Today, Paraloup is an open-air laboratory for a sustainable return to life, culture and work in the mountains, guided by an awareness of the historical memory of the people who have lived here and their form of community resistance.



# JUNTOS FARM



“GOOD FOOD CAN ONLY COME FROM GOOD INGREDIENTS. TO US, GOOD MEANS GROWN / RAISED RESPONSIBLY FOR PLANET AND PEOPLE.”

*(Finn Harries, co-founder)*



Fig. 50 (on the left) Drawing of the farm. Retrieved: <https://juntosfarm.com/pages/about>  
Fig. 51 Farmers going to the crops. Retrieved: <https://juntosfarm.com/pages/about>

**WHERE** Santa Gertrudis, Ibiza, Spain

**WHO AND WHEN** Sophie Daunais and Christian Jochnic, 2018

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
Organic farming  
Collaboration  
Small-scale farming  
Regenerative agriculture  
Community-focused  
Living lab  
Soil health  
Biodiversity  
Ecosystem resilience

**WHAT** Juntos Farm, founded in 2018 by Sophie Daunais and Christian Jochnick, started as a family project aimed at reconnecting with nature and growing organic food for their family and the local community in Ibiza. Recognizing the challenges faced by small-scale organic farmers, such as lack of access to shared infrastructure, resources, and markets, they envisioned creating a diverse, dynamic, and community-focused farm. They stumbled upon an abandoned dairy farm in Santa Gertrudis, Ibiza, which they saw as an opportunity to create a living lab and a lighthouse project supporting a transition to local, regenerative agriculture.

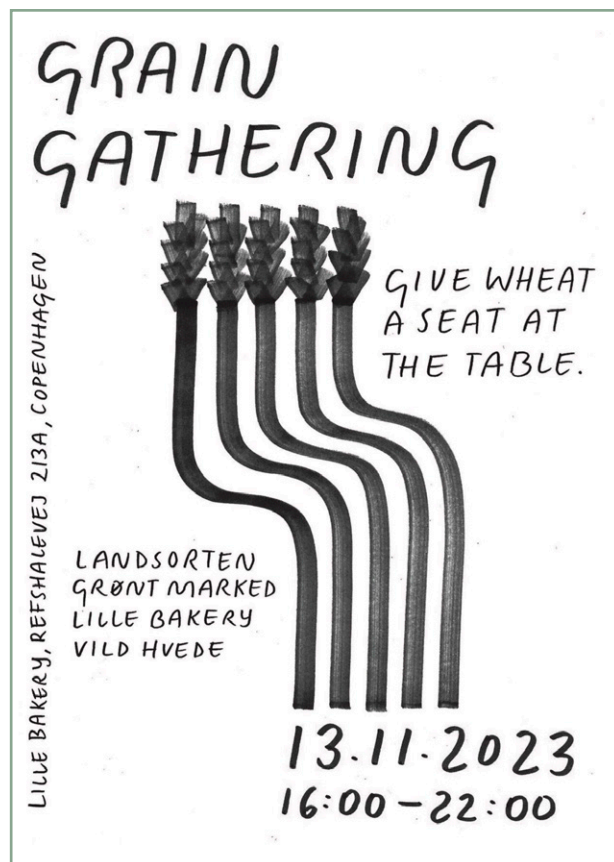


Fig. 52 Entrance of the farm. Retrieved: <https://juntosfarm.com/pages/about>

Sophie went on to establish Juntos House, a farm-to-table sister restaurant, while Christian met Finn Harries, who shared his vision for a local hub for food, farming, and community, leading to the creation of Juntos Farm. Their mission is to build a team of passionate individuals and create a space that embodies their vision of regenerative farming—a holistic approach focused on improving soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience. Juntos Farm aims to break down barriers in the local food economy by integrating cultivation, transformation, and community engagement, celebrating every step from farm to plate.



# LILLE BAKERY



“GOOD FOOD CAN ONLY COME FROM GOOD INGREDIENTS. TO US, GOOD MEANS GROWN / RAISED RESPONSIBLY FOR PLANET AND PEOPLE.”

*(Lille Bakery directive)*

Fig.53 A poster of an event held in Lille Bakery. Retrieved: <https://www.lillegrocery.com/events>



**WHERE** Copenhagen, Denmark

**WHO AND WHEN** 2018

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Responsible farming
- Local production
- Ethics
- Community
- Biodiversity



**WHAT** The Lille Bakery project is a small bakery and restaurant located in Refshaleøen, Copenhagen. And as an example it moves away from remote and rural areas, yet it is considered an interesting case study for its approach to social and environmental dimensions. It was opened with the goal of being a space that brings people together. The idea came from a Kickstarter campaign that funded the bakery, thanks

to the help of friends, supporters and volunteers. The bakery is committed to providing high-quality food and bread, working exclusively with local farmers and fishermen who share a vision of environmental and social responsibility. These partners focus on responsible farming, avoiding the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers and working to preserve the natural balance of the soil.

Community is an essential element of the bakery, with regular local customers, art students, sailors, entrepreneurs and travelers from around the world. Sharing breakfasts, conversations and greetings helps create a vibrant and welcoming environment.

A focus on wheat is central to the bakery, which works with local flours and selected wheat varieties. Whole grain flours are used to promote nutrition and biodiversity, avoiding industrialization and working with local mills that grow their own wheat. In addition, the bakery values local seeds and grains, such as camellia seeds, which are rich in omega-3 and contribute to dietary diversity. The research and use of Danish ingredients is a commitment to support cold climate agriculture and promote local and sustainable production.

Finally, the bakery serves as a cultural place in the neighborhood, organizing workshops, events, and talks inviting the local community to take part.

Fig.54 View of Lille Bakery room. Retrieved: <https://www.lillegrocery.com>



# A New Economy



## FOOD COOP - CSA

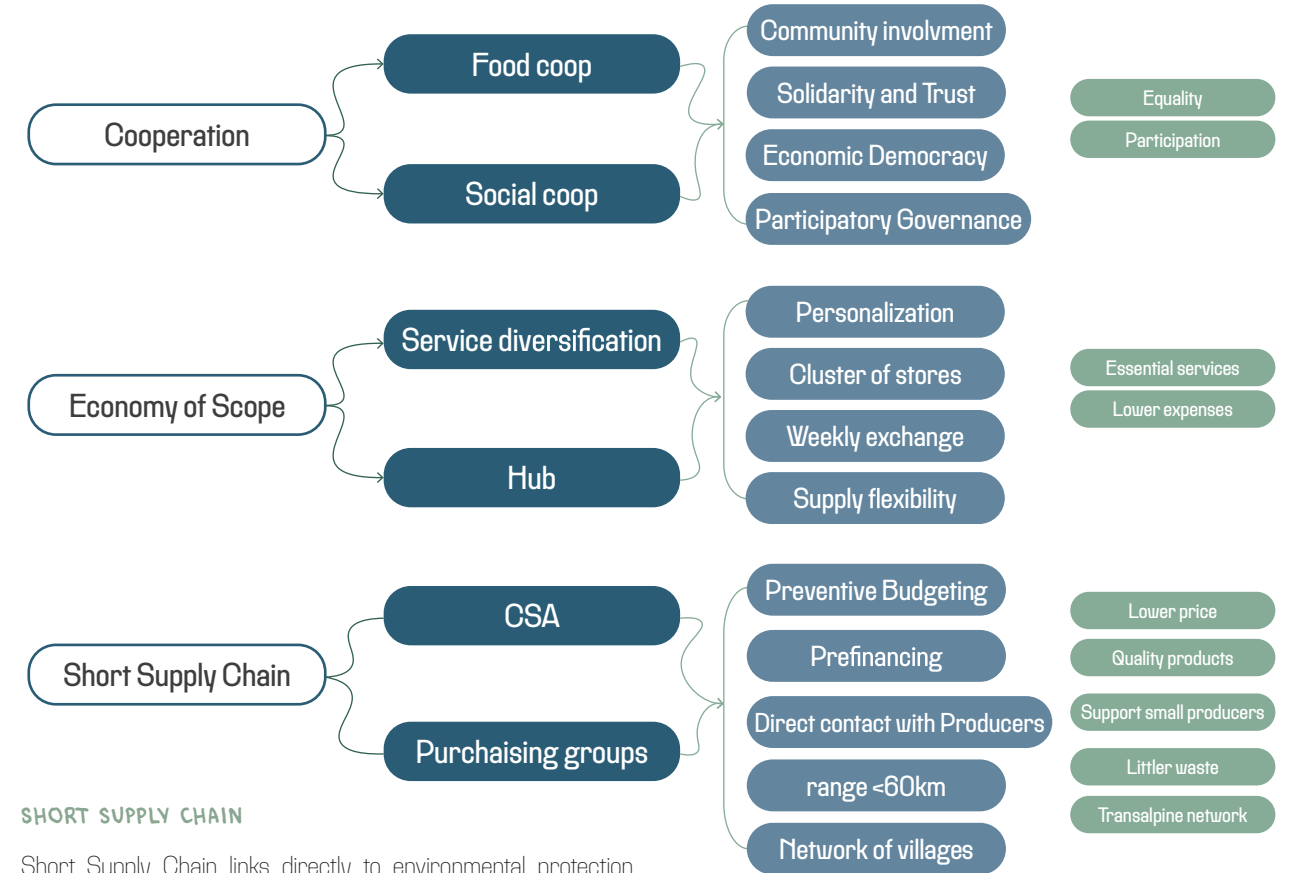
Food Cooperatives and Farm Support Communities emphasize the importance of collaboration among and between community members, promoting an economic system based on mutual aid and solidarity. These initiatives incentivize not only local cooperation but also the interconnection between the different localities and actors in the Upper Valley, creating a support network that goes beyond territorial boundaries, stimulating a circular and proximity economy that benefits all concerned.

## ECONOMY OF SCOPE

Economies of Scope, unlike traditional economies of scale, focus on diversification and joint production of different goods using the same inputs. This approach makes it possible to exploit unique synergies, improve energy efficiency and reduce waste, thereby contributing to a more flexible and adaptable economy that better meets local and global needs simultaneously.

The third and final pillar, A New Economy represents the alignment between the previous two axes toward an economic model that integrates community collaboration and environmental protection. This axis does not aim solely at economic progress but is committed to achieving it while respecting social responsibility and ecosystem conservation, ultimately aiming to achieve the welfare of the local community and thus the regeneration of these lands.

The micro-themes under this axis—Food Cooperatives, Agricultural Support Communities, Economies of Purpose, and the Short Supply Chain—illustrate different ways through which an economy can evolve to become a more inclusive, resilient, and environmentally friendly one.



## SHORT SUPPLY CHAIN

Short Supply Chain links directly to environmental protection by promoting the use and sale of local products that reduce the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation. This practice not only supports the local economy but also encourages responsible, conscious and quality-oriented consumption, enhancing local production and reducing environmental impact. Therefore, we see this axis as a catalyst for an economic model that balances innovation and tradition, social sustainability and environmental sustainability, demonstrating that it is possible to

pursue economic growth in ways that enrich the community and protect the environment.

By fostering practices such as food cooperatives, supporting Economies of Scope, and adopting short supply chains, A New Economy is proposed as a replicable and scalable model for building a more sustainable and just future.

Fig. 55 Graph illustrating the New Economy Value in detail. Design by the author



# COMPTOIR DE CAMPAGNE



“BRINGING LOCAL SERVICES BACK TO THE HEART OF VILLAGES THAT LACK THEM. PROMOTE LOCAL AND ARTISANAL PRODUCTION AND ENCOURAGE A RATHER MORE SUSTAINABLE MODE OF CONSUMPTION.”

*[Comptoir de Campagne website]*

Fig. 56 Inside of a Comptoir de Campagne shop.  
Retrieved: <https://comptoirdecampagne.fr>



**WHERE** Auvergne–Rhône–Alpes, France

**WHO AND WHEN** Virginie Hills, 2016

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Social and Solidarity Economy
- Revitalization of rural territories
- Business activities
- Essential services
- Social ties
- Appointment space
- Personalization
- Community life
- Cluster of stores
- Weekly exchange
- Supply flexibility
- Social and environmental impact

**WHAT** Comptoir de Campagne is classified as a Social and Solidarity Economy enterprise (Le Monde, 2018), with the main objective of revitalizing rural territories. The company provides its know-how to assist entrepreneurs in opening businesses in villages, within a supportive and committed network serving local administrators and rural residents.

Comptoir de Campagne is committed to reinvigorating village centers lacking essential services, enhancing local and artisanal production to promote rather

more sustainable consumption, and focusing on strengthening social ties as its priority. Currently, the network has 14 stores, including 3 franchises, working with 300 producers to offer 2,000 local products. This initiative stands out as a franchise with a strong positive impact, supporting entrepreneurs in initiating projects that respond to the social and environmental challenges of our society.

The concept behind a Comptoir de Campagne includes a grocery store with mainly local and short-circuit products, daily services (such as laundry, gas, post office, printing, money withdrawal, parcels), bread, a bistro area for eating, drinking or attending events, and an appointment space (hairdresser, beautician, osteopath, ...). However, each store is customized to meet the specific needs of its customer area. In some locations, bars and restaurants have also been opened to turn these stores into centers of community life in areas prone to depopulation.

The initial focus was on the Forez and Beaujolais regions (Auvergne–Rhône–Alpes), with the goal of opening six stores in each area, considering it essential to form clusters of stores to ensure their profitability. The Network promotes a clustered organization in the territories, facilitating weekly exchange with other stores and a flexible supply organization, thus supporting a business model that not only meets the immediate needs of rural communities but also contributes to a positive social and environmental impact.



# PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP



“AMERICA’S LARGEST COOPERATIVE AND PARTICIPATORY SUPERMARKET (40 YEARS OF EXISTENCE - 17,000 MEMBERS)”

*(Park slope food coop website)*

Fig. 57 Milstein, I. (2019). [Illustration of Park Slope Food, NY]. Retrieved: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/11/25/the-grocery-store-where-produce-meets-politics>



**WHERE** Brooklyn, New York, USA

**WHO AND WHEN** 2018

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
Food Cooperatives  
Workers, Owners and Consumers  
Values and Principles  
Democracy  
Solidarity  
Sustainability  
Organic Products  
Social Responsibility  
Equality  
Participation  
Community

**WHAT** The Park Slope Food Coop is a member-owned and managed food store, an alternative to traditional profit-oriented stores.

Members contribute with their work by cooperating and working together to keep prices low while respecting the values and principles of the Coop. Only members can shop and share responsibilities and benefits fairly.

The Coop promotes ethics and responsibility as an employer and

neighbor. It is a purchasing agent for its members and does not sell on behalf of any industry. It supports sustainable agriculture and seeks to offer organic and healthy products, avoiding those that depend on the exploitation of others.

The Coop respects the environment, reduces the impact of our lifestyles on the planet, and prefers to buy from local, environmentally friendly producers. Is committed to educating itself and others about health, nutrition, cooperation and the environment. It promotes diversity and equality, opposes discrimination in all forms, and seeks to maximize participation at all levels.

The Park Slope Food Coop is America’s larger cooperative and participatory supermarket, with 40 years of existence and 17,000 members. It is based on the Seven Principles of Cooperation and cooperative values that reflect social, political and business concerns. Cooperatives adhere to the values of self-help, responsibility, democracy, fairness and solidarity, with the goal of promoting the welfare of members and ensuring a prosperous business for decades to come.

Cooperative principles are guidelines through which cooperatives put their values into practice. These principles include voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education and training, coordination among cooperatives, and concern for the community..



# L'ALVEARE CHE DICE SÌ!

“L'ALVEARE CHE DICE SÌ!” ALLOWS PEOPLE TO SHOP FOR HEALTHY, QUALITY FOOD DIRECTLY FROM SMALL, LOCAL PRODUCERS, GIVING THEM A MORE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO EARN A LIVING.”

*[The Alveare's manifesto]*



Fig. 58 A producer market within the Alveare. Retrieved: [https://www.repubblica.it/economia/rapporti/osserva-italia/osservacibo/2020/02/17/news/il\\_web\\_che\\_fa\\_bene\\_ai\\_contadini\\_L\\_alveare\\_che\\_dice\\_si\\_cresce\\_del\\_62\\_-248794561/](https://www.repubblica.it/economia/rapporti/osserva-italia/osservacibo/2020/02/17/news/il_web_che_fa_bene_ai_contadini_L_alveare_che_dice_si_cresce_del_62_-248794561/)

**WHERE** Europe

**WHO AND WHEN** Guilhem Cheron, 2010

- INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**
- Sustainability
  - Good Nutrition
  - Protected producers
  - Fair prices
  - Quality of products
  - Transparency
  - Fairness
  - Nutrition education
  - Agricultural transition
  - Awareness



Fig. 59 A producer market within the Alveare. Retrieved: [https://www.repubblica.it/economia/rapporti/osserva-italia/osservacibo/2020/02/17/news/il\\_web\\_che\\_fa\\_bene\\_ai\\_contadini\\_L\\_alveare\\_che\\_dice\\_si\\_cresce\\_del\\_62\\_-248794561/](https://www.repubblica.it/economia/rapporti/osserva-italia/osservacibo/2020/02/17/news/il_web_che_fa_bene_ai_contadini_L_alveare_che_dice_si_cresce_del_62_-248794561/)

**WHAT** The movement L'Alveare che dice Sì! (The Hive That Says Yes!) works to promote a sustainable alternative in food. Through its network, passionate individuals work to provide tools for better eating and support producers committed to caring for the planet. The main goal is to provide people with tools to eat better and support producers committed to environmental sustainability. The manifesto reflects a commitment to a fair and ecological food system, with a focus on fair value sharing, food education, and accompaniment in the agricultural transition to rather more sustainable practices.

The movement is based on six core principles:

1. Producers set their own prices to ensure a decent income.
2. Collective intelligence ensures product quality, with transparency and constant dialogue between consumers, producers and managers.
3. Logistics is reinvented to foster proximity and sustainability.
4. Fair value sharing is essential, with transparency on the margins practiced by middlemen.
5. Food education is crucial for all consumers, with accessible information to enable informed choices.
6. The agricultural transition must be accompanied to ensure sustainable food for the planet and farmers.

L'Alveare che dice Sì! represents a perfect example of a short and responsible supply chain.





# TOWN HALL OF BRIGA ALTA



Fig. 60 Villani, F. (n.d.). *Uppea, una delle tre borgate che compongono Briga Alta.* Retrieved: <https://www.arpae.proteffealpimarittima.it/news/2007/briga-alta-un-paese-speciale>

## MORE THAN JUST A TOWN HALL!

<b>WHERE</b>	Briga Alta, Piedmont, Italy
<b>WHO AND WHEN</b>	Federica Lanteri, 2021
<b>INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS</b>	Renovation of the municipal seat Local economy Service hub Marginal context

### WHAT

In 2016, following a severe flood, the municipality of Briga Alta, one of Italy's smallest municipalities perched at 1,310 m above sea level on the border between Piedmont, France and Liguria, lost its town hall. Since then, until November 6, 2021, it has been housed in nearby Ormea. However, thanks to the intervention of the Mayor Federica Lanteri, the town hall has been completely renovated,

allowing the municipality to return to its home. In addition to the administrative offices and council chamber, the new building has a conference room, an infirmary, and two rooms that can be used in the future for commercial activities. In addition, a Postamat has been installed right next to the town hall. The opening of the new town hall is an event of great importance to the town, not only because it has regained its municipal seat, but also because it has integrated essential services that were previously unavailable in the municipality. This represents an excellent example of a local economy and service hub in a marginal setting.



# CRESCO ORTO

## “GROW SLOW, GROW TOGETHER, GROW CRESCO!” (Cresco orto slogan)

### WHAT

<b>WHERE</b>	Rossana, Piedmont, Italy
<b>WHO AND WHEN</b>	Humus Job, 2021
<b>INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS</b>	Farmers, Citizens and Members Transparency Cooperation & Mutual support Solidarity economy Food Sovereignty Preventive Budgeting and Prefinancing Weekly Supply

Cresco, located in the Varaita Valley, is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative linking farmers with community members to cultivate food collectively. It's built on principles of solidarity, respect, and mutual aid, emphasizing sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. Members fund the farm's seasonal expenses upfront, receiving a weekly vegetable box for 30 weeks. The initiative eliminates price per product, sharing the harvest and risks equally. Members also contribute to farming and community activities, fostering a strong, sustainable food community

Fig. 61 A crop of cresco Orto. Retrieved: <https://noisiamocresco.it>





# A lesson from the policy makers

Grouped in this category are some examples of organizations, associations or institutions dealing with the regeneration of rural and marginal areas, without belonging to one category of the previous ones (community, land, economy) in the particular, but touching on all three axes through their projects.

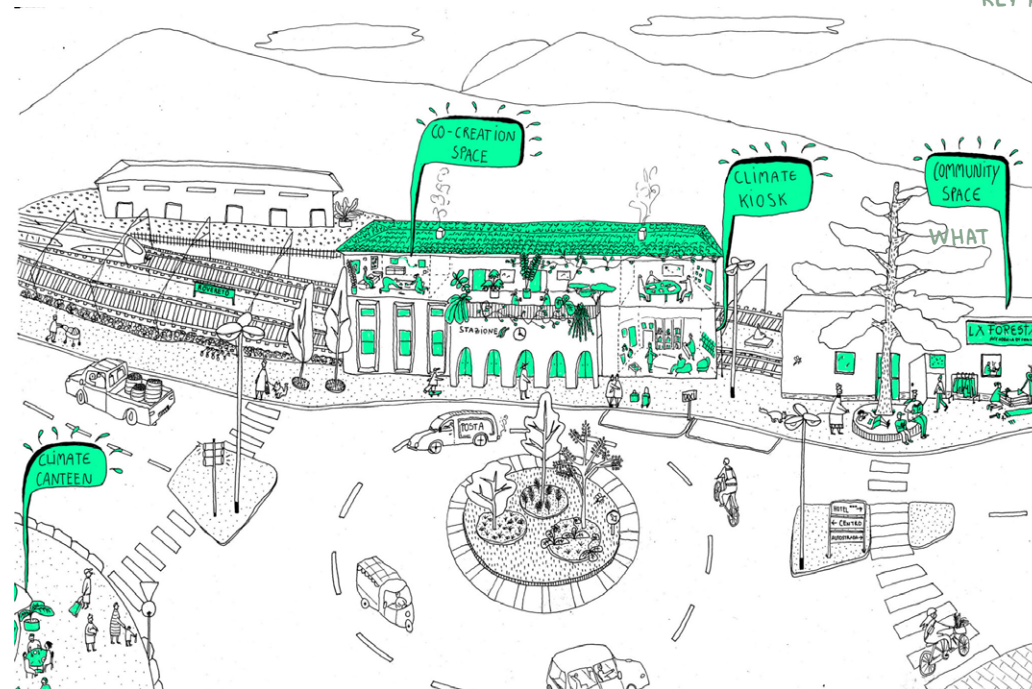


Fig. 62 Mamma, F. (2022). Station for Transformation. Alpine Community Economies. Retrieved: <https://www.alpinecommunityeconomies.org/2023/06/30/eui-innovation-grant-station-for-transformation/>

# ALPINE COMMUNITY ECONOMIES

**WHERE** Rovereto, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Dr. Bianca Elzenbaumer, 2019 – on going

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
Participatory design  
Climate challenges  
Biodiversity  
[Trans]local economies  
Community economies  
Regional innovation

The Alpine Community Economies Lab uses participatory design and foresight methods, combined with practical economic experimentation, to help Alpine communities address the challenges raised by climate change, biodiversity loss, and limited capacity to imagine possible futures. This community-rooted research space collaborates with a variety of civic and public actors to create a direct link between theory and practice. It engages

**“ALPINE COMMUNITY ECONOMIES LABORATORY IS A RESEARCH LAB BASED AT LA FORESTA IN THE LAGARINA VALLEY, TRENTO, ITALY.”**

*(Alpine Community economies website)*

in cross-cutting investigations of (trans)local economies to support eco-social ways of life in the valley and beyond, through participatory design to promote civic participation in the construction of desirable alpine and (trans)local futures. The lab conducts a significant portion of its research in an accessible and visible physical space in Rovereto to anchor the project in the local context and facilitate access. The participatory research approach through design aims at knowledge production with the practice and active involvement of people, evolving participatively what they intend to produce, such as social, visual and spatial tools.



# HUB DI MONTAGNA



THE MOUNTAIN HUB ASPIRES TO BECOME AN ADDED VALUE FOR THE LOCAL CONTEXT, SUPPORTING THE NETWORKING OF ITS CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HUMAN POTENTIAL. THIS IS WHY IT WORKS TO OFFER, ON THE ONE HAND, OPPORTUNITIES FOR APPROACHING AND GETTING TO KNOW THE AREA THROUGH TRAINING MOMENTS, AND ON THE OTHER HAND, DIRECT SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO WANT TO MOVE TO THE VALLEY THROUGH COACHING DESK ACTIVITIES.

*[Italia che cambia, 2023]*

Fig. 63 View of Valle Subequana. Retrieved: [https://riabitareitalia.net/RIABITARE\\_LITALIA/category/hub-di-montagna/](https://riabitareitalia.net/RIABITARE_LITALIA/category/hub-di-montagna/)



**WHERE** Valle Subequana, Abruzzo, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Giovani Dentro – Riabitare l'Italia, 2020

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS** Remainder and Return  
Neo-population  
Metromountain  
Re-generation and re-inhabitation  
National Strategy of Inner Areas  
Mapping local resources  
Innovation of traditional crafts

**WHAT** The “HUB di Montagna” project, promoted by Riabitare l'Italia in collaboration with the Gran Sasso Science Institute and the Municipality of Fontecchio, aims to revitalize and enhance the territory of the Subequana Valley, an inner and marginalized area but rich in potential. This initiative follows the previous project “Giovani Dentro” (2020–2021), aiming to transform the area into an attractive place not only for those who live there but also for those who wish to return or re-populate it. The goal is to counter depopulation and abandonment by activating local resources and strengthening the community, working both locally and translocally to create synergies between the Subequana Valley, L’Aquila and surrounding areas. The project’s

18-month activities include local resource mapping, participatory workshops, the creation of a Mountain HUB and information desk, as well as residential and online training modules. These actions are supported by a technical and scientific committee and aim at the regeneration and re-inhabitation of territories at risk of abandonment, promoting innovation and economic and social revitalization.

Among the projects promoted under “Mountain HUB” is the Scuola di Montagna, an initiative originally originated in Piedmont where it took place in the Western Alps, and now re-proposed in the Abruzzo Apennines. The Scuola di Montagna is an initiative that aims to foster engagement, knowledge, training and exchange among individuals interested in living in Italian mountain areas, both those who wish to relocate and those who choose to stay. This edition aims to explore and compare the specificities of the mountain contexts of the Alps and the Apennines, promoting a dialogue between these two geographical realities. The objective is twofold: on the one hand, to facilitate knowledge and integration between these different mountain areas, and on the other hand, to attract individuals interested in moving to the mountains, offering them the opportunity to discover in the Subequana Valley, in the province of L’Aquila, an ideal environment to realize their life and work projects, whether on a stable or temporary or multi-local basis.



# ALMANATURA



ALMANATURA EXISTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS AND TO COMBAT DEPOPULATION BY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

*(Almanatura website)*

Fig. 64 Almanatura Headquarter. Retrieved: <https://almanatura.com>



**WHERE** Sierra de Huelva, Spain

**WHO AND WHEN** Collettivo Alma Natura, 1997

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**  
Work  
Educational activities  
Health inequalities  
Access to technology  
Rural areas  
Entrepreneurship  
Elderly well-being



Fig. 65 Almanatura Headquarter. Retrieved: <https://almanatura.com>

**WHAT** Almanatura has been reactivating rural areas since its history began in 1997. Its purpose is to avoid depopulation by empowering rural people through public / private alliances. From a small town in the Sierra de Huelva (Spain), it takes action throughout the country running projects with positive impact that improve the quality of life of people living in rural areas. Its main areas of intervention focus on 4 different axis:

**Employment:** providing training, entrepreneurship support and job seeking assistance for rural residents.

**Education:** organising educational

activities aimed at children and adolescents to ensure that they have the same educational opportunities as those living in the city.

**Health:** developing initiatives aimed at health and the promotion of healthy lifestyles to reduce the rural-urban health gap.

**Technology:** fostering education and facilitate access to new technologies to decrease vulnerability and increase the well-being of older people in rural areas.

Almanatura collaborates with various companies, from Coca-cola Spain to Ikea, whose ultimate goal is always to build new opportunities for the rural world.



# LIMINAL



Fig. 66 Searight, T. (2022). Rebuilding the Edge – The 2022 Liminal workshop in Abruzzo. MIT Architecture HQ Gallery. Retrieved: [https://www.instagram.com/mitarchitecture/p/Cofu2njulWDI/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/mitarchitecture/p/Cofu2njulWDI/?img_index=1)

LIMINAL ACT IS THE CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC VISIONS AND PROJECTS THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL PARTNERS AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN THE AREA.

*(Liminal website)*



**WHERE** Roma, Italy

**WHO AND WHEN** Harvard Innovation Lab, 2021

**INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS**

- Socio-economic regeneration
- Information gathering and analysis
- Applied field research
- Direct and concrete involvement with local
- Technical skills of young professionals
- Integrated approach
- Scientific research and field action
- Generate measurable and sustainable impacts for rural communities

**WHAT** Liminal is a network of young experts working with communities and authorities to transform small Italian municipalities by addressing problems such as depopulation and lack of resources. Liminal's approach involves direct and concrete involvement with territories and their communities, employing the energies and technical skills of young professionals in projects aimed at the sustainable socio-economic regeneration of Italy's rural areas.

Liminal's action is divided into three main directions of intervention that complement each other, facilitating the transition from scientific research to tangible and measurable effect on territories:

**Data:** Consists of data collection and analysis, mapping, and scientific research to support public policy and activism. This process includes several steps such as collection, visualization, verification, advocacy and dissemination of collected data. Liminal Data is concerned with gathering information on urban conditions, socio-economic problems, and natural characteristics of small municipalities to inform public policy and contribute to the academic debate on demography.

**Lab:** A hands-on approach involving applied research and concrete solutions for sustainable community development. Through workshops spread throughout Italy, Liminal collaborates with universities and local actors to document, analyze and propose solutions, involving students and researchers in field experiences ranging from three to eight weeks.

**Act:** Assisting in the implementation of strategies and projects with measurable impact for communities, building on interdisciplinary expertise. Liminal Act deals with regional planning, tourism, cultural heritage and property management, agriculture, and also in the creation of communication strategies and urban planning projects. This axis involves the implementation of multi-year projects in collaboration with partners at the local, national and international levels, from conception to implementation, ensuring optimal impact of available resources.



# SMOTIES

## CREATIVE WORKS WITH SMALL AND REMOTE PLACES

Fig.67 co-design of a green recreation zone in Bobrek Poland.  
Retrieved: <https://humancities.eu/smoties/event/update-activities-in-poland/>



WHERE Europe

WHO AND WHEN POLIMI DESIS Lab, 2006

### INSPIRATIONS AND KEY ASPECTS

- Small and remote places
- Livability of public spaces
- Participatory design
- Cultural and creative activities
- Rural depopulation
- Material and immaterial culture

### WHAT

SMOTIES is a project that aims to develop spatial and service solutions through cultural and creative innovations in 10 small and remote European places affected by heavy rural depopulation.

This project involves public institutions, design centers, creative agencies, national associations and research centers in 10 European cities. These places were chosen for their particularity of location, cultural uniqueness, development potential and role as consolidators in their creative sectors.

It is based on the Human Cities network, an interdisciplinary exchange platform founded in 2006, which involves universities, agencies, and cultural companies across Europe, promoting



- Zarek Cieszyń  
Bobrek, POLAND
- University of the Aegean  
Samos Island, GREECE
- Universidade da Madeira  
São João da Madeira, PORTUGAL
- Flur JOHANNELUM  
Obervering, AUSTRIA
- Urban Planning Institute  
Borovnica Public Square, Dolomites  
Landscape Park, SLOVENIA
- Great Village Trustee Limited  
Epsom, UNITED KINGDOM
- Politecnico di Milano  
Ecosio Monforato, ITALY
- Reinforce sif  
Reykjavik, ICELAND
- OMA de Design  
From the Coligny Valley to the  
Carthusian monastery of  
Sartre-Grainville, FRANCE
- Estonian Association  
of Designers  
Jõhvi, ESTONIA

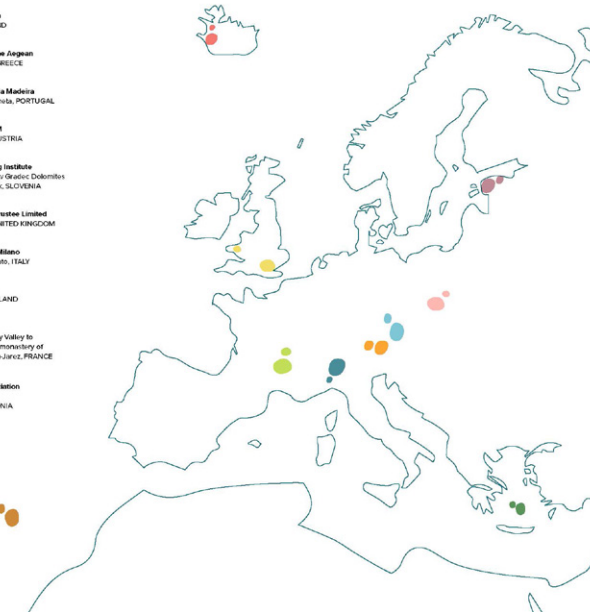


Fig. 68 Map of the SMOTIES program's partner.  
Retrieved: <https://humancities.eu/smoties/>

the livability of public spaces through participatory design. The goal is to transform remote places into rather more livable spaces by involving local residents in the development of cultural and creative activities. Human Cities examines the livability of public spaces through participatory design to facilitate process systems and innovation.



# 05.

# THE BAKERY



Fig.69 Illustration of Pietraporzio's bakery. Illustration by the author



# Introduction

For the reader to have gotten to this point of the research must have gone through a series of words, pages, and chapters talking about urban versus rural areas, marginality, the importance of designers in a world where everyone designs (Manzini, 2015), and a series of case studies from the world that are inspiring and positive, having seen and read all this must have made them wonder how we came to be talking about bakeries.

In this chapter, we are going to talk about bakeries, which are perhaps much more than just a production space where fragrant croissants and crispy bread buns are baked: but rather a social place whose role in a community and its importance as a common good needs to be understood in a broad sense. The presence of shared public spaces allow interactions between people and thus generate well-being and cohesion within a community.

According to Filippo Barbera, socialisation is what allows us to be everyday citizens (Barbera, 2023), in other words, not mere consumers but citizens who perform active citizenship actions (Moro, 2013).

At the end of July 2023 an event marked the everyday life of the upper valley community with the display of a sign on the door of the bakery shop of Pietraporzio (see Chapter 2) that states:

**FROM TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, THE STORE WILL BE CLOSED.**



Although we are in an age of digital and mass consumption, where large franchises and supermarket chains seem to dominate the commercial landscape, the closure of a small bakery in the village of Pietraporzio has raised a wave of concern and discontent among local residents. This event has renewed attention to the vital function that small businesses, such as bakeries, play within communities, especially in the most isolated and marginal ones where often they represent the only convenience store. Traditionally, the bakery is not only a place to buy bread and baked goods, but it represents a real point of social gathering, a place where relationships are woven, news is exchanged and moments of daily life are shared.

Accordingly, in the next chapter, the reader is introduced to the significance and importance of bread (and bakeries) in social history, and then discusses the relevance of renovating and maintaining the Pietraporzio Bakery in operation. Subsequently, a preliminary idea for the design of the Bakery will be presented and developed through co-design sessions with the Upper Valley community, which is a topic covered in Chapter 6.



# Bakeries as a symbol of Social Value

## BRIEF SOCIAL HISTORY OF BREAD

The importance of bread in human history and its role in society is undeniable. Since ancient times, bread and those who make it have had a prominent place in societies, as witnesses and protagonists of social, cultural and economic changes. One thinks of the ancient Greeks, for whom the baker was considered a “guardian of fire” and bread, a symbol of fertility and fecundity of the earth, a food protected by the goddess Demeter, indeed goddess of bread. Or even to the Egyptians, who were skilled practitioners of fermentation, to the point of being called “bread eaters.”

Fig. 70 Millet, J.-F. (1854). *A Woman Baking Bread*. Kröller-Müller Museum. Retrieved: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-francois-millet/woman-baking-bread-1854>







Bread has been present throughout the evolution of civilisation, symbolising, depending on the period, prosperity or starvation, peace or conflict. It has been a symbol of struggle in various revolutions throughout history, one remembers the famous “Assault on the Grucce Bakery” described by Manzoni in his famous novel the *The Betrothed* (1827), or the famous phrase attributed to Marie Antoinette “If they have no more bread, let them eat brioche”, actually written by Jean-jacques Rousseau, in reference to the starving people during a time of famine. Until it eventually became, in more modern times, a true public service, characterised by a fixed price to make it accessible at all times and to all.

**“BREAD IS SO INTIMATELY LINKED TO HUMAN LIFE THAT IT HAS BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF IT”**

*[Enciclopedia Treccani, 2006]*



*Fig. 71 DaMilve, S. (2022). Christophe Adé, baker in Combaillaux. Le Monde. Retrieved: [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/13/from-field-to-oven-how-a-french-mayor-brought-local-bread-back-to-his-town\\_5993468\\_183.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/summer-reads/article/2022/08/13/from-field-to-oven-how-a-french-mayor-brought-local-bread-back-to-his-town_5993468_183.html)*



In modern society, despite their apparent simplicity and monotony, the role of bakers and the social function of the bakery are evolving into a much more creative craft. In a world that tends increasingly toward industrialization and standardization, these places represent pillars of cultural resilience, places where the quality, tradition and added value of local production are still valued and cherished.

**“THERE WAS A TIME WHEN PEOPLE WOULD MAKE VERY THICK AND HEAVY BREAD ROLLS, TURN ON THE COMMUNAL OVEN ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK, AND EVERYONE WOULD MAKE BREAD TOGETHER WHICH WOULD LAST UNTIL THE FOLLOWING WEEK. THE BASIS OF BREAD-MAKING, HOWEVER, IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN THE FERMENTATION, OF A FLOUR OBTAINED BY GRINDING WHEAT TOGETHER WITH WATER, AND THIS WILL NEVER CHANGE.”**

*[Raoul Maeder, 2013]*



“IT’S A BIT OF A STRANGE CHEMISTRY, USING FLOUR AND WATER. YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING THE FIRST FEW DAYS, BUT IT’S FASCINATING TO WATCH THIS LIVING THING YOU’VE CREATED WITH YOUR OWN HANDS THAT YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF. I PUT A RUBBER BAND ON THE POT ON THE EDGE OF THE MIXTURE TO WATCH IT RISE. IT’S KIND OF BEEN MY BLOCKING PET.”

*[Le Monde, 2022]*

Eventually, bread-making, with its alchemy of simple ingredients such as flour and water, represents more than just a recipe, but a true form of human genius, which over the centuries has been able to unite people around the fire of the communal oven.

#### BAKERY CRISIS AND ITS REVIVAL

The crisis affecting bakers is not an isolated phenomenon, nor is it limited to Italy. If, for example, we move a little way to neighboring France, whose national symbol is the traditional baguette, we find that here, too, there are numerous towns left without a baker. However, the response of some communities, which have organized themselves to safeguard or revive their bakeries (see Boulangerie Cooperative de Uzeste), shows that the desire to keep these businesses alive is strong. Examples such as that of

the mayor of Combaillaud, a village located in the south of France, who started a 100% local bread production, are proof that the desire to preserve these traditions can translate into concrete and successful initiatives. [Le Monde, 2022]

Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rediscovery of home baking highlighted even more the importance of bread in people’s lives. Many have found the process of making bread a meditative and therapeutic activity, rediscovering the pleasure of creating something fundamental and nutritious with their own hands [Le Monde, 2022]. According to baker Christophe Vasseur, making bread involves a series of such precise actions that, along with taking care of the sourdough starter, have proved antidepressant effect.



#### REDESIGNING A BAKERY

Given the significant role that bread has played throughout history and its ability to shape society we could define the bakery, which is commonly the place where the creation of bread and its distribution take place, not merely as a store, but a symbol of community cohesion, a place where people meet, exchange stories and share experiences. In a rapidly changing world, the challenge will be to preserve these common living spaces, recognising their irreplaceable value not only for the well-being of a community, but for its vitality.

Finally, the Bakery, could be defined as an urban common. And more specifically, one of those goods and services that play a vital role in sustaining the daily lives of the members of a community [Meroni and Selloni, 2023]. According to Meroni and Selloni (2023), design, and specifically co-design, can be a major resource in this type of goods and spaces, which can lead to a radical and long-term transformation both in the physical space and in the way these places are experienced. Moreover, taking up Sangiorgi and Prendiville’s definition, service design, is that methodology capable of planning, organising people and infrastructure in a systemic manner of a given service, in this case common good.

Therefore, the author of this research saw in the recent closure of the Pietraporzio’s bakery not just a loss but an opportunity to rethink and redesign the bakery space in a way that could benefit

the community itself. Through the implementation of service design, co-design and place-making, it is intended to reveal and plan the interactions that could take place in the redesigned bakery, considering both spatial (the physical setup of the shop) and temporal (when and how the space is used) dimensions. By doing so, the researcher aims to create a space that empowers the local community of the Upper Stura Valley. Providing them a space that serves as a community hub by fostering social connections, supporting local economy, and enhancing the overall well-being of the community.



# A New Bakery PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

As a result of these initial insights, theoretical and field research, an initial idea for the Bakery was presented. This first concept saw a bakery in continuous transformation, renewing itself every season following the different needs of its customers.

The offerings of the Bakery, at this stage, are divided into two macro groups which are the Low and High season. The low season includes the winter season (fall-winter-spring), which are the hardest months for the upper valley, when it is depopulated by tourists and the few inhabitants remain. The high season, on the other hand, is the summer season (June to August), including some holidays during the year (such as New Year's Eve and Easter), when the upper valley repopulates thanks to tourists and vacationers who return to open the houses that were left closed during the winter months.

It is precisely under these two great seasons that the bakery

undergoes its greatest metamorphosis: during the summer it opens its doors to tourists and vacationers, becoming a true cultural center of the Upper Stura Valley; and during the winter it devotes itself to caring for its inhabitants by offering services and treats for the remaining population.



## The Hybrid Bakery



THE ESSENTIAL SHOP

Some basic necessities such as a grocery store, newsstand, hardware store, and tobacco shop can be found in the store.



THE SERVICE CENTER

Once a week a room in the bakery is made available to host some outreach services useful to the resident population.



THE CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

The bakery always has its doors open for some chit-chat; it aims to be a meeting and exchange place for residents.



THE ITINERANT ACTIVITY

During the colder and less populated months, the bakery moves directly to customers through the activation of a home service.

Fig. 72 Illustrations of the Low Season service offers, by the author

### LOW SEASON

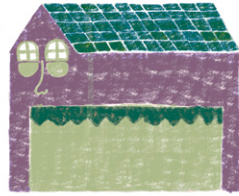
During the winter months, the bakery serves as the Hybrid Bakery, a bakery that offers services and opportunities to the residents of the upper valley villages.

The main offerings in the Hybrid Bakery, in addition to a range of basic necessities, are a mini service center where different proximity services are offered to the population every day.

Avoiding residents from having to travel more than 40km to be able to take advantage of these types of services, especially during the harshest months of the year. A door-to-door sales service and leisure activities.



### The Curious Bakery



#### THE LIBRARY

A book and object lending service available in the bakery.



#### THE DIY DRINK

Organization of a series of handcraft workshops (wool, ceramics, wood, ...) to discover the culture and typical processing of the area. And the opportunity to visit workshops for processing local raw materials: soap factory, honey, cheese.



#### THE CULTURAL SNACK

Snacks are a regular fixture at the bakery. During the cultural snacks, tea and cookies are served with presentations, talks, exhibitions, film and documentary screenings, and small music and theater performances.



#### THE OUTDOOR BAKERY

Educational and playful group activities to be carried out in the open air: geological, botanical, foraging and sports group excursions. The goal is the discovery of the territory and its enhancement.

Fig. 73 Illustrations of the High Season service offers, by the author

#### HIGH SEASON

During the high season (summer), the Hybrid Bakery transforms, creating room for the Curious Bakery, a cultural and recreational center. With an offer focused more on tourism and proposes activities for tourists to discover the area.

Residents in this season have a key role: to let newcomers discover the richness of their territory! They are therefore incentivized to take part in organizing and taking care of the various activities offered by the bakery.

At the same time, guests of the bakery are invited to present activities and bring new insights to local residents.



# Implementation of the three core values

How are the three founding values of the project (v. community, territory, and new economy) discussed earlier in this system being maintained?

The pillar of the community, and thus social sustainability, is a value that is cultivated and maintained through the interaction between the various actors involved. The bakery becomes a meeting place, not only for locals but also for visitors, creating a bridge between residents and tourists. This constant dialogue allows the local community to open up to new perspectives and, at the same time, offers tourists the opportunity to explore the area in a genuine and authentic way. Social sustainability is shown in the creation of a stronger community fabric, where the bakery takes on the role of the beating heart of social interaction.

Regarding the environmental axis: the bakery places a strong emphasis on sustainability, prioritizing the use of fresh and

local products. Most of the ingredients used come from within a 60-kilometer radius, ensuring not only freshness and quality but also a lower environmental impact due to transportation. Working directly with local producers, without intermediaries, is an excellent example of a short supply chain, a model that not only supports the local economy but also reduces the ecological footprint of the production process.

Thus, the introduction of a traveling offering further reduces energy consumption in the winter months by closing the store on days dedicated to home delivery service, which is carried out sustainably using electric vehicles.

Finally, the economic dimension, is based on the concept of economies of scope. This vision allows the bakery to transform into a "hybrid" entity, which goes beyond the sale of baked goods to offer a wide variety of services.

06.

# CO-DESIGN SESSIONS



## Introduction AIMS AND AGENDA

The previous chapters (see Chapter 3) looked at how the role of place-making and design can be useful in the context of territory and community regeneration. More specifically, it discussed how the discipline of place-making is able to reveal the relationship that occurs between a space and its inhabitants, consequently generating an idea of well-being, and how design, namely participatory design, can be a powerful tool to understand such a relationship and thus include people experiencing this place firsthand in decision-making processes. This approach can be further useful and comprehensive if implemented in the so-called inner areas, those considered marginal and with major difficulties, as well as the focus of this research, as quoting researcher Valeria Giulia Sonzogni (2021):

**“WHO KNOWS BEST THESE AREAS, THE DIFFICULTIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN THEM?”**

Fig. 74 Co-design with residents - boundary object from Experimentation Session. Photo by the author



Fig. 75 Co-design invitation: (from left to right) Co-design with Residents, Co-design with Tourists, Co-design with Administrations  
Design and Illustrations by the author

Consequently, the author decided to implement the research through a series of co-design workshops held together with the different actors part of the Upper Stura Valley community, site of the research. Initially, meetings with residents and tourists were held, and finally the one with representatives of the local administration. This schedule was designed in order to first collect data from the sessions conducted with residents and tourists and subsequently present them to the administrators. On this basis and following the definition of the Collaborative Design Framework, we could consider the first workshops, conducted together with residents and tourists, to be based on “design facilitation,” that is, an exploratory and investigative activity focused on the experiences and knowledge of the future users of the product-service system being designed, the ultimate goal is to understand their needs. On the other hand, the workshop

carried out with the administrations opted for a so-called “design steering” where, the collaboration focuses on “Imagining and considering options beyond the world as it is” (Meroni et al., 2018).

Attendees were recruited through an open invitation to participate. Regarding residents through the posting and distribution of flyers in the different municipalities where the research was conducted; for potential short-term tourists through an open call on Instagram; and for vacationers through a targeted invitation by the author to some villagers in the valley. Finally, a targeted invitation was made in the case of the last workshop to the municipal administrations of the three villages involved in the research and some important cultural operators in the valley, including the tourism and culture office of the Unione Montana and the Porta di Valle tourist office.



The four workshops were held between November and December, two of which took place within the museum space of the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia in Pontebernardo and two online. The co-design sessions were concept-driven, relying on the presentation of the first concept designed for the Bakery.

A different outcome was expected for each session, thought to eventually converge into a single one with the definition of the final concept of the Bakery. Specifically in the case of the residents, the ultimate goal was to understand which essential services and how often they were needed, as well as what their needs and desires are as citizens of the valley. concerning the vacationers, who are considered halfway between residents and tourists, as they are connoisseurs of the valley and its culture but not permanent inhabitants of these places, the discussion focused on their experiences in the valley, their expectations, and what improvement areas they imagine for the future of the region. Finally, together with the administrators, an attempt was made to find strategies aimed at developing some of the critical points that emerged the most during the previous workshops. Although the local population is characterized by little active participation, the workshops turned out to be very much attended and the participants lent themselves to the various activities proposed by the author with great willingness and enthusiasm.

Therefore, In this chapter, the four co-design sessions held during the development of the La Biga – Upper Valley Bakery project, the ultimate goal of which is to offer a series of proximity services to the residents of the Upper Valley and consequently an improvement in daily life, are exposed and analyzed in detail. Accordingly, the ultimate purpose of the meetings was to develop the preliminary offer proposed for the Bakery (see previous chapter) in order to understand the different views, needs and desires of its future users.

The organization, development and final results obtained in the respective co-design sessions are presented in detail as follows.



# Co-design with residents

## THE UPPER STURA VALLEY SERVICES LAB



Fig.77 Co-design with residents - Warm up. Photo by Elena Curti

### AIM

The purpose of the workshop was to understand the different needs and wants of an Upper Valley resident in terms of essential services to the population. Featuring a main emphasis on the frequency needed for certain services. Overall, the goal was to engage with the resident population on the difficulties and richness of living in an area such as the Upper Stura Valley.

### SETTING AND TIMING

The workshop was held on Saturday, November 25, 2023 at the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia in the hamlet of Pontebernardo. The workshop planned to last an hour and a half, from 16h00 to 17h30, finally lasted until 18h, with a total of two hours.

As the location for the activity, the exhibition space of the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia was chosen, because it is in the municipality of Pietraporzio, which is one of the focus towns of the research, but more importantly, it is the municipality where the Bakery is located, whose re-design is proposed with this research. Besides its cultural value for the area, this space was chosen for its spatial and functional characteristics. In fact, the room, besides being spacious, has a projector and some display panels, which can be moved if necessary to modify the space and be used to display posters. In addition, some large tables were provided for the workshop.

Fig. 76 Co-design with residents - boundary object from Experimentation Session. Photo by Elena Curti



## PARTICIPANTS

The workshop involved 15 residents from the municipalities of Argentera, Pietraporzio and Sambuco, with a predominance of residents from Pietraporzio (and hamlets). Moreover, participation was predominantly female, with 11 women and 4 men attending. And finally, the average age was 60 years.

Participants were recruited through an open invitation prepared by the undersigned, posted on municipal bulletin boards in the different villages and shared via private message to personal contacts. Very helpful was word of mouth among citizens interested in participating. In addition to the participants there were few “passers-by,” not counted in the workshop participants, who throughout the course of the activities came to snoop around, and without participating in the activities still attended the presentation of the project, first part of the workshop. These were rather passing tourists or vacationers who came for the weekend.

## WORKSHOP STYLE AND TOPIC

For the workshop under consideration, the facilitation typology was chosen, namely the format focused on listening to participants and understanding their points of view, rather than generating ideas with them. Moreover, since this was a concept-driven type of workshop, as the work was based on the concept initially presented, the collaboration aimed, initially, to share the needs and experiences of the participants (see The Valley of Needs and Desires) and, afterwards, to go into detail and rather more concretely develop some of the options presented (see Build your Bakery).

The designer in this case played the role of facilitator, assisted by Elena Curti, a student of Interior and Spatial Design at Politecnico di Milano. Elena helped in documenting the session through photographs and welcoming the participants.

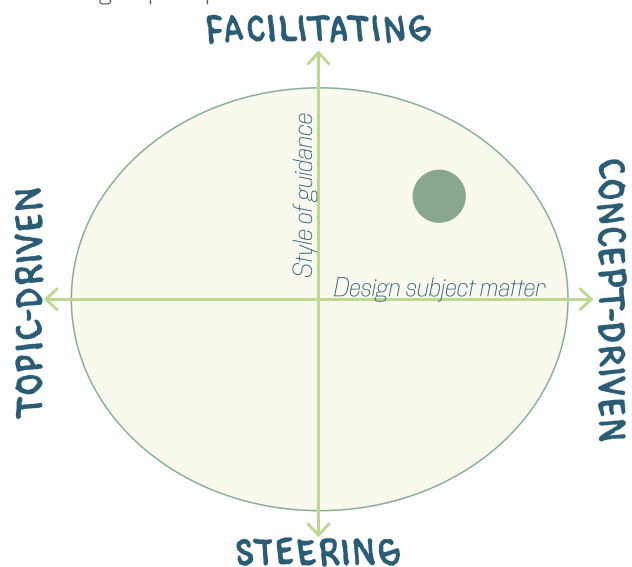


Fig.78 The Collaborative Design Framework  
Source: Meroni, A., Selloni, D., & Rossi, M. (2018). Design by the author



# DEVELOPMENT

This workshop process was structured into 4 phases, along a time span of 1h30: Warm-up (15min), Creative session (15min), Experimentation session (20min), Snack and conclusion (15min).

## WARM-UP

**LENGTH** 15 minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS** presentation, envelope

**OVERVIEW** the warm-up phase was a presentation of the project and some case studies considered important to the concept presented. An example per category (Community – Territory – Economy) was presented for the case studies, considered by the author to be important to help participants enter the design perspective and to show how some of these practices were implemented in places not that far from the territory concerned: both in terms of geography and context. During this stage, an envelope was also distributed to participants containing a number of useful items throughout the workshop.



Fig.79 Envelope for participants. Photo by Elena Curti.

These included: a photo release, some cards useful for the following activity, and a pen. Additionally, on the envelope was asked to mark the upper valley town in which one is a resident and the year of one's birth, data useful later in registering participants. Finally, the envelope included a small drawing as a thank you for participation.





Fig.80 "The Valley of Wishes" boundary object.  
 Fig.81 A participant writing on the Wish Card.  
 Fig.82 Focus of "Wish and Need Cards" boundary object.  
 Photos by Elena Curti

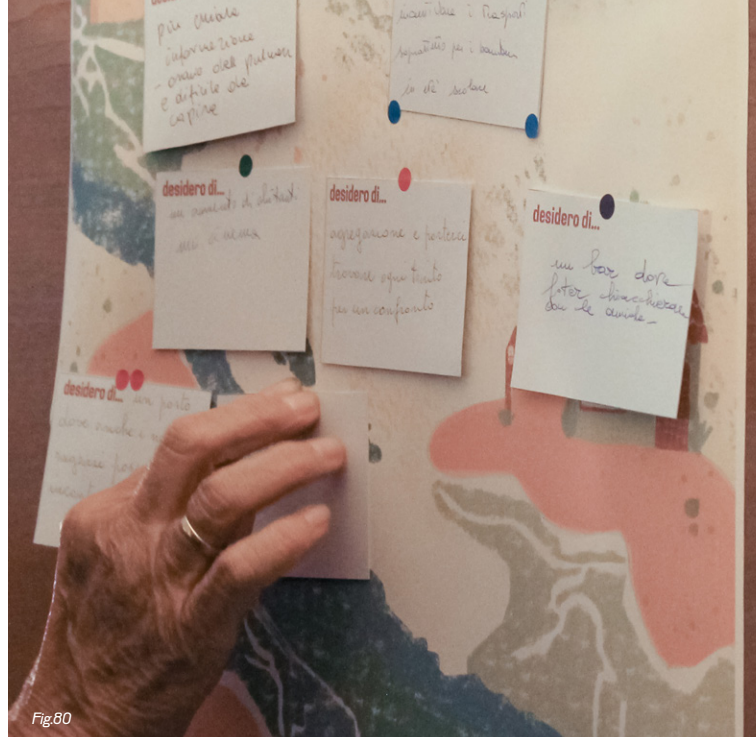


Fig.80



Fig.81

Fig.82

## THE VALLEY OF WISHES AND NEEDS - CREATIVE SESSION

**LENGTH** 15 minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS** "The Valley of Wishes" poster, "The Valley of Needs" poster, wish and need cards.

**OVERVIEW** In the Creative Session, the activity "The Valley of Desires" and "The Valley of Needs" was featured. In this first activity, participants shared their desires and needs related to living in the Upper Stura Valley, often revealing an overlap between desires and needs.

Each participant was required to write on previously distributed cards their desires and needs related to living in the Upper Stura Valley. After the five-minute time provided had passed, each participant was invited to pin the card to the designated collective poster and comment their choices out loud.

**OUTCOME** the second part proposed for the activity, was intended to bring the participants to confrontation, who, however, were very reserved and the majority limited themselves by simply placing the tag on the poster without commenting on their choices. Thus, the moment of confrontation sought by the designer was missed. However, desires on the whole included the creation of public spaces and a library, while needs focused on transportation services, social gatherings, elderly and child care, and convenience stores for basic necessities. Finally, it is curious to note that often in these marginal areas desires correspond to the same needs.

Fig.83 The service center boundary object.  
 Fig. 84 Participants engaging with boundary objects.  
 Photos by Elena Curti

## BUILD YOUR OWN BAKERY - EXPERIMENTATION SESSION

**LENGTH:** 20minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS** A2 prints of the Bakery's macro-offerings; illustrated cards of services

**OVERVIEW:** In the prototyping phase, participants collaborated on the four macro-services proposed in the Bakery concept: the Service Center, the Chit-chat House, the Itinerant Activity, and the Essential Store. The goal was to assign desired frequencies for each proposed service within these categories.

The macro-categories, printed on A2 posters and presented arranged on a table, were accompanied by decks of cards where a possible service was illustrated on each. The participants, divided into 4 groups of 3 to 4 people, took turns playing the game of placing the needed service in the frequency range they considered appropriate. Frequency was divided into 7/7, 1/week, 1/month, 1/year. Participants, in addition to the previously prepared picture cards, could decide to use the wild card and add a service not listed on the cards.

**OUTCOME:** Through the assignment of preferred frequencies for the different services within these categories, preferences emerged regarding services such as health care, social activities, and grocery stores, with specific high frequency requests for services such as baby-sitting, weekly health care,



Fig.83



Fig.84

and convenience stores. Although participants enthusiastically lent themselves to the activity, there was little use of the wild card by residents, who were mostly restrained to arranging the cards present and very few additional services were added.



## SNACK AND CONCLUSION

**LENGTH:** 20minutes

**OVERVIEW:** the workshop ended with a small snack offered to the participants and some closing words from the facilitator. Here the facilitator was able to summarise the comments, the results obtained and thank for the participation.

**OUTCOME:** At this last stage, some of the participants finally felt comfortable to express some personal thoughts, and finally a discussion took place between the participants on the living conditions in the Upper Valley and possible solutions for the future.

The workshop ended with the inhabitants deciding to create a cinema! An initiative that actually took shape a few weeks later, with the first screening on the 28th of December at the Locanda la Pecora Nera in Ponteb Bernardo. An initiative that continues to this day with one screening a week where the inhabitants themselves choose by voting which film to see.

**CONCLUSION:** Finally, the workshop identified the community's needs and desires for services and resources needed in the upper Stura valley, highlighting the demand for social spaces, basic services, and the preference for some services over others in terms of frequency and availability.



Fig.85



Fig.86



Fig.87



Fig.88

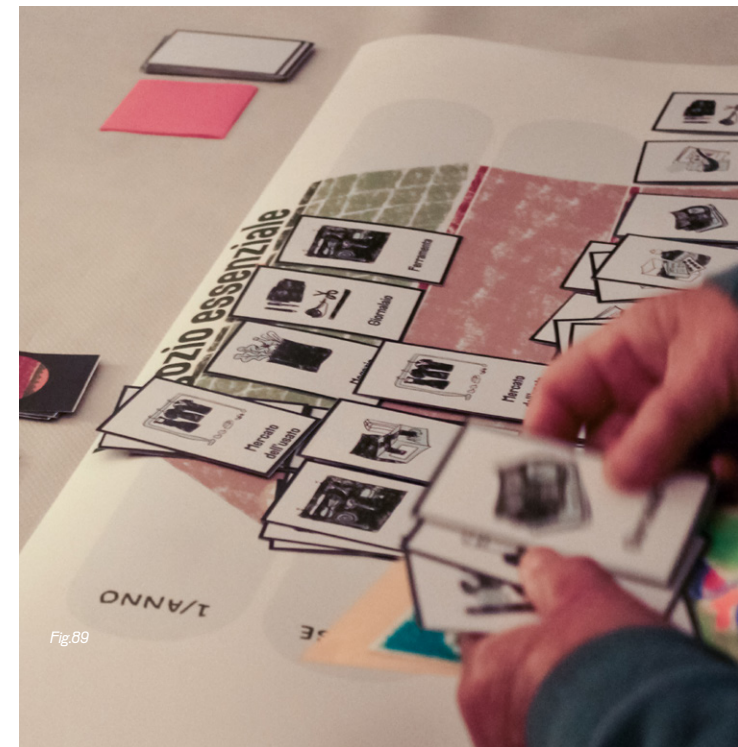


Fig.89

Fig.85-86 Conclusion words and discussion.  
Fig.87 Moment of the experimentation session  
Fig.88 Participants during the first part of the ideation session  
Fig.89 Essential shop boundary object experimentation session  
Photos by Elena Curti



# Co-design with Tourists

## LET'S DESIGN TOGETHER THE NEW 100% LOCAL EXPERIENCE IN THE UPPER STURA VALLEY

### SETTING AND TIMING

On Tuesday 28 November 2023, two co-design sessions were organised with the category of tourists visitors to the Upper Stura Valley, a first one with holidaymakers and a second one with potential short-term tourists. Based on previous research (see Community), the author decided to divide the session into two distinct groups, as the two categories of tourists have different characteristics and needs. As well as a different background knowledge of the area. The first session was held at 14h, in Italian, and the second at 18h, in English.

Both, having taken place during the month of November, a period hardly frequented by tourists, were conducted online via the streaming platform Zoom. Instead, the FigmaJam platform was used to carry out the activities, the control of which was in the hands of the workshop facilitator who moved the pawns and filled in the appropriate spaces based on remarks from the participants. The activity lasted a total of 1h00/1h15.



### WORKSHOP STYLE AND TOPIC

Once again, the workshop was of the “ facilitation” type, rather aimed at the exploration and understanding of issues concerning tourism in the Upper Valley and consequently topic-driven. Although the participants were nevertheless presented with the project and the initial concept of the Bakery, an approach that favoured listening to the participants' experiences and knowledge was chosen.

The role of facilitator was played by the author herself, and in this case, as the workshop was conducted online, there was no need for an assistant.

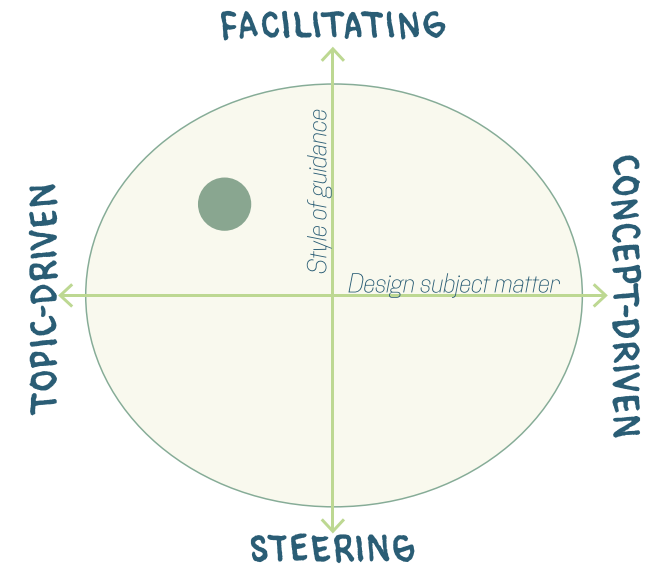


Fig. 90 The Collaborative Design Framework  
Source: Meroni, A., Selloni, D., & Rossi, M. (2018). Design by the author



# Holidaymakers



Fig. 91 Screenshot of some Participants of the workshop.  
Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by hte Author

## AIM

Il workshop con i villeggianti aveva come obiettivo quello di comprendere appieno le aspettative e i desideri di coloro che hanno consolidato un legame profondo e stabile con il territorio dell'alta Valle Stura. Attraverso quattro sezioni distintive, questo incontro aveva come scopo di delineare in modo dettagliato le esperienze, modalità di scoperta e salvaguardia del territorio immaginati da questa categoria di visitatori, così come le loro esigenze e punti di vista sull'attuale proposta turistica presente nell'Alta Valle.

## PARTICIPANTS

Seven people, aged between 23 and 60, participated in the workshop. Most of them holidaymakers in the municipalities of Pietraporzio and Argentera. The participants were contacted directly by the designer on the basis of personal knowledge. Seven people, aged between 23 and 60, participated in the workshop. Most of them holidaymakers in the municipalities of Pietraporzio and Argentera. The participants were contacted directly by the designer on the basis of personal contacts.



# DEVELOPMENT

The workshop was organised in four sections: a presentation of the project and some case studies, followed by a short ice-breaking activity, a conceptualisation session and a prototyping session.

## PICK YOUR CHARACTER - PRESENTATION&ICEBREAKER

LENGTH: 25 minutes

BOUNDARY OBJECTS: presentation slide, "And you, which holidaymaker are you?"

OVERVIEW: In the first activity, each participant was asked to build his or her own character based on the presentation of some stereotypes related to mountain visitors and to tell a small anecdote about their experience in the Valley.

OUTCOME: This exercise had no specific purpose for the sake of the research, other than to introduce the participants on the topic of the project and make them feel comfortable before starting the actual activities. However, it allowed valuable personal experiences to emerge, consolidating an authentic and vivid picture of the valley.

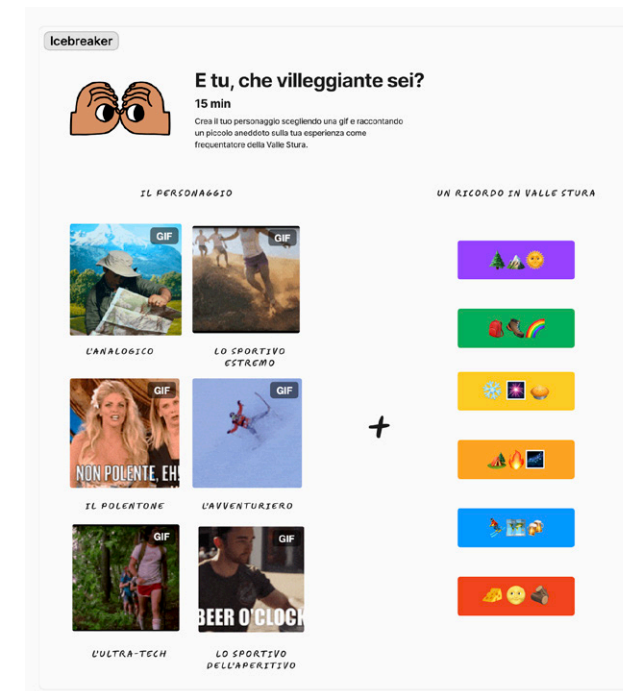


Fig. 92 Screenshot from "Pick your character" activity.  
Retrieved: Figma. Photo by hte Author



# THE KISS METHOD - IDEATION SESSION

LENGTH: 15minutes

BOUNDARY OBJECTS: the KISS method

OVERVIEW: In the creative session, the kissing method was applied: Keep, Improve, Start, Stop. The goal was to identify improvement points, initiatives to start, stop or keep. Overall, requests emerged in the improvement of infrastructure such as transportation and internet connection, as well as communal social and cultural spaces. Nevertheless, key points that resulted from this activity include: preserving naturalistic authenticity, improving organization and communication, starting the redevelopment of municipality spaces and engaging the community, and ceasing the closure of public spaces.

OUTCOME: As a result, with the KISS method, key areas in need of improvement were clearly identified, as were explicit strengths and challenges to preserving the authenticity of the valley: including actively engaging the local community in decision-making. Finally, the importance of a proactive and inclusive dialogue between tourists and residents and the need for accessible community spaces were emphasized. Vacationers, particularly during this activity, proved to be a critical yet proactive category of the local community.

Fig.93 Screenshot from the KISS method board. Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by the Author



## The KISS method

15 min

Based on your experience in the upper Stura Valley, what are the things you would like to improve, change, maintain or eliminate?

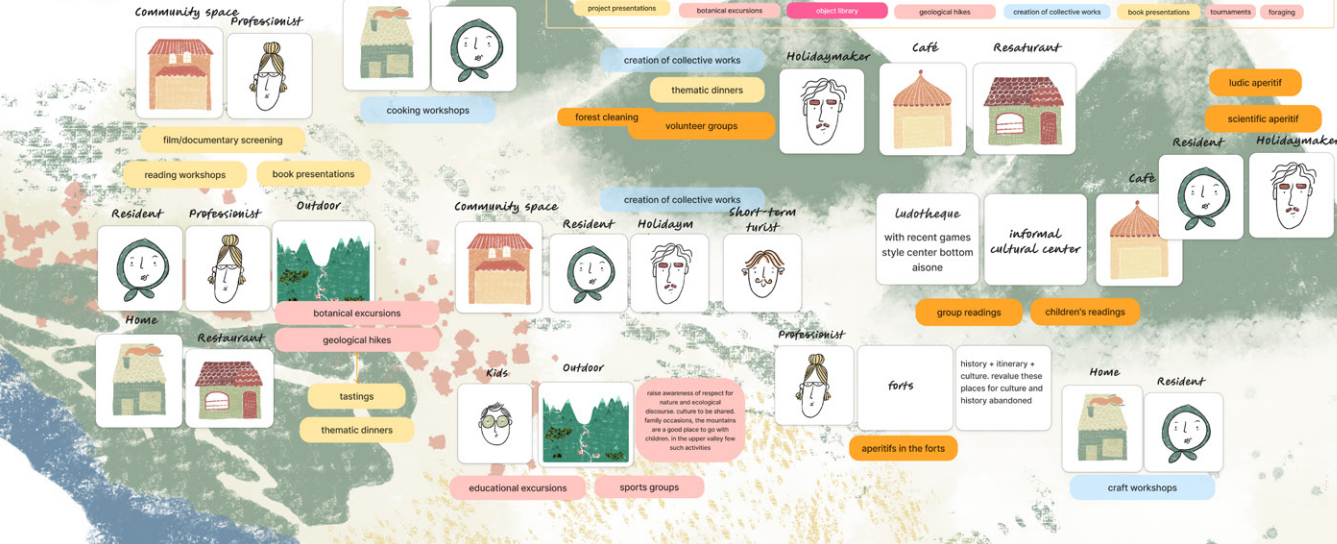


Fig.94 "The Experience I Wish" final board. Retrieved: Figma. Picture from the author.

# THE EXPERIENCE I WISH - PROTOTYPING SESSION

LENGTH: 20minutes

BOUNDARY OBJECTS: "The experience I wish..." map and cards

OVERVIEW: the last activity, focused on creating customized experiences for participants in the context of the upper Stura Valley. Participants were given a set of elements to combine in order to build their ideal experience. Such elements included a place, a character, which can be a local, a tourist or a professional, and an action, which represents the activity to be performed. Using the three selected elements (place, character, and action), each participant imagines and describes one or rather more activities they would like to experience in that specific area. After they have

built their experiences, participants shared them with the rest of the group. This time of sharing was instrumental in gathering feedback, ideas, and suggestions from other participants. The subsequent discussion led to the evolution of some of the initial ideas, making them somewhat richer and more detailed.

OUTCOME: The goal was to boost creativity by thinking of experiences that are both desirable and feasible, taking into account the unique characteristics of the Upper Stura Valley. In general, there is a strong demand for cultural experiences, hikes and tastings, as well as the presence of more activities for children.



# Short-term Tourists



Fig. 95 Screenshot of some Participants of the workshop. Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by hte Author

## AIM

The purpose of the meeting with potential short-term tourists from the upper Stura Valley, was mainly to understand their interest in area discovery activities, trying to understand what experiences or initiatives they would be inclined to participate in. In addition, the goal was to define the ways and level of involvement in the possibility of becoming "Temporary Inhabitants."

## PARTICIPANTS

A total of 7 people participated, of different nationalities (including French, Belgian and Italian) between the ages of 22 and 28. For this reason, the workshop was held in English. Participants were found through an open call on Instagram in order to have people who were not already familiar with the Alta Valle Stura area and who had not already had experience in the region.



# DEVELOPMENT

The workshop structure was similar to the previous one, with an initial project presentation and some example case studies from around the world, followed by an icebreaker and the two research activities, "I would like to be a temporary inhabitant if..." and "The experience I wish..."

## PICK YOUR CHARACTER - PRESENTATION&ICEBREAKER

LENGHT: 25 minutes

BOUNDARY OBJECTS: presentation slide, "And you, which mountain person are you?"

OVERVIEW: In the first activity, each participant was asked to build their own character based on the stereotypes presented. Since the attendees were people who didn't know the Upper Valley, unlike the first workshop, they were asked to tell a small anecdote about their experience in the mountains. In addition there was a preliminary brief presentation of the area and some case studies.

OUTCOME: this first activity, designed primarily to make participants comfortable, was also a way to identify the experience and perception of the mountains by different participants.

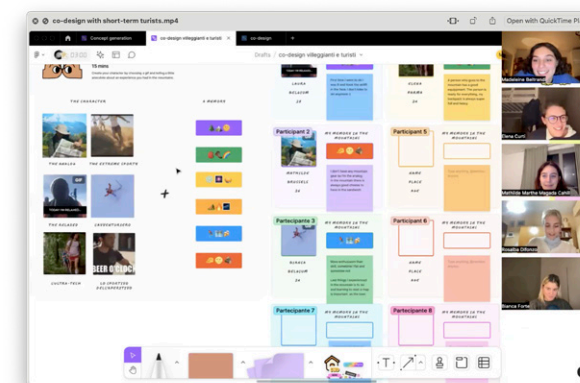


Fig. 96 Screenshot from "Pick your character" activity. Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by hte Author



## TEMPORARY INHABITANT - IDEATION SESSION

**LENGTH:** 15minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** I would like to be a “temporary inhabitant” if...

**OVERVIEW:** For the creative session, an activity similar to the kissing activity in the previous workshop was chosen, but if in the first case, they were asked to build on their own experience in this case they were instructed to focus on a possible holiday experience in the Upper Stura Valley. Therefore, participants were asked: if you were a temporary resident of the Upper Stura Valley...what would you need? What would you like? What would you not like instead, and if you would not want to be a temporary inhabitant, for what reason. Consequently, participants imagined a stay experience in the area, outlining needs, wants, and potential concerns. The authoress was keen to investigate this topic to understand whether a young, international audience might be interested in the idea of going to live in the mountains and if so in what ways. In an effort to develop regeneration policies that go against the phenomenon of depopulation.

**OUTCOME:** The workshop activity clearly highlighted the basic needs that these potential tourists seek during a temporary stay. The main points that emerged are, as main needs, discovery of the local environment and sharing authentic experiences, access to essential services, and a variety of activities. Desires, on the other hand, focus on accessibility of transportation, integration with the local community, and learning about local traditions, while the main concerns relate to the risk of social exclusion, isolation, and language difficulties.

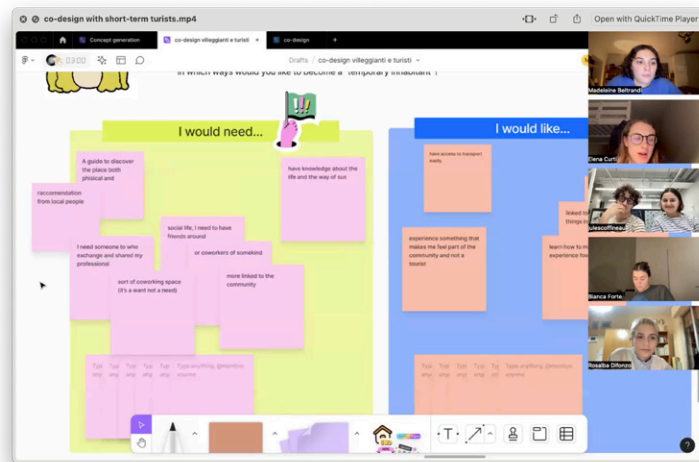


Fig.97 Screenshot from the “If I would be a temporary inhabitant...” board. Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by the Author

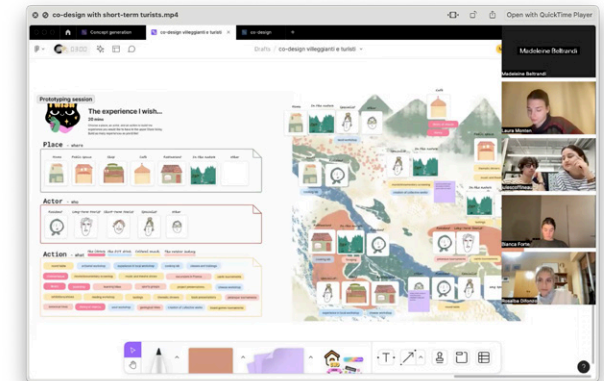
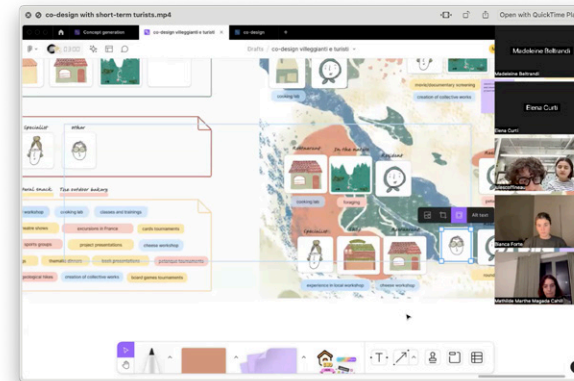


Fig.98 Screenshot from “The Experience I Wish” board. Retrieved: Zoom. Photo by the Author

## THE EXPERIENCE I WISH - PROTOTYPING SESSION

**LENGTH:** 20minuti

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** The experience I wish...

**OVERVIEW:** In the prototyping phase, “The Experience I Wish...” was replicated. [see Holidaymakers] Once again, the goal was to understand what are the major tourist attractions sought by a young and international audience.

**OUTCOME:** the prototyping phase further emphasized the desire for authentic and local experiences. These potential short tourists expressed interest in workshops involving local raw materials, cultural activities led by experts, and rather deeper involvement in community life.

**CONCLUSIONS:** In sum, the perceptions and demands of short-term tourists align with the trend toward rather more authentic, experience-driven, and community-oriented tourism. Their expectations offer valuable insights to develop strategies and services that can meet their needs, thus improving the attractions and hospitality of the Upper Stura Valley for this specific audience. Furthermore, an outlook of young people open to the idea of living the mountain in its totality prevails, where, however, the greatest precondition is: the need of a vibrant and inclusive community.



# Co-design with Valley Administrators

## THE UPPER STURA VALLEY SERVICE LAB



### AIM

In the context of the last co-design session, the focus was on analyzing and integrating the data collected during the previous meetings with residents and tourists. Thus, this allowed, not only to expose the needs and expectations of both groups to local governments, but also to build and outline specific services designed to improve the overall experience in the area. In developing these services, together with the attendees, important attention was given to the strategic and systemic aspect, the goal of which was to implement effective and sustainable solutions. Through this approach, an attempt was made to create a concrete path toward improving the quality of life and tourism offerings.

### SETTING AND TIMING

On Thursday, December 7, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, the third and final co-design session was held at the exhibition hall of the Ecomuseo della Pastorizia in Pontebernardo together with some representatives of the administrations of the Upper Stura Valley of Demonte. Having already held the first workshop in this space, the choice was obvious. Moreover, in addition to the previously listed positive features (see *Workshop with residents*), and given its display panels and vast space, boundary objects from previous sessions could be displayed within the space.

*Fig.99 Boundary objects on the table before starting the activity. Photo by the author*





## PARTICIPANTS

The final session of the co-design cycle saw the active participation of representatives of the administrations of the Upper Stura Valley of Demonte, involving mayors, cultural figures and other key players, for a total of 5 participants. Specifically, the session was attended by: Mr. Bubbio Carlo Mayor of the municipality of Sambuco; Ms. Sabrina Rocchia Mayor of the municipality of Pietraporzio and municipal councilor, Matthew Roà; the director of the tourism and culture office of the Unione Montana, Mauro Bernardi; and the director of the Donne di Montagna coordination, Patrizia Palonta. Also present at the session was Stefano Martini, vice mayor of the municipality of Pietraporzio. However, Stefano only played the role of a witness, as having already attended the session with residents would have affected the outcomes.

## WORKSHOP STYLE AND TOPIC

The latter workshop followed a guided design approach, in which the designer used their creative and strategic skills to facilitate the development of concrete ideas by stakeholders. Initially, a topic-driven methodology was adopted, inviting administrators to imagine the future of the Upper Valley and steer them away from the current perception of the area. Subsequently, it shifted to a concept-driven approach, focusing on developing a range of services in a practical way and seeking innovative solutions to issues raised in previous meetings with residents and tourists.

The researcher again played the role of facilitator, assisted by Isabelle Beltrandi, a resident of the hamlet of Pontebernardo, in documenting the workshop and with welcoming participants.

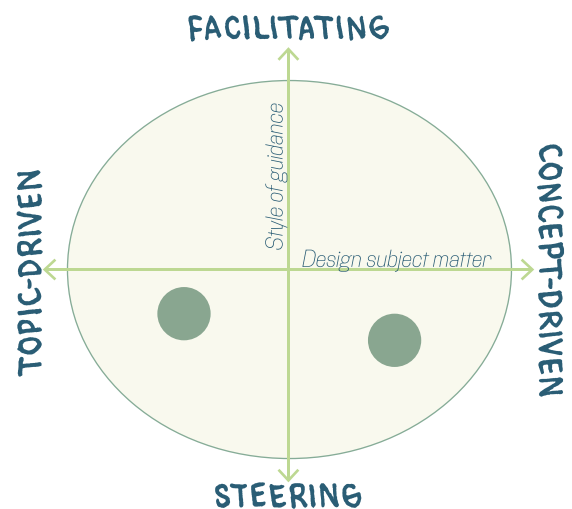


Fig. 100 The Collaborative Design Framework  
Source: Maroni, A., Selloni, D., & Rossi, M. (2018). Design by the author



# DEVELOPMENT

The workshop consisted of 4 distinct moments and activities: beginning with a presentation of the project and some examples of possible strategies, an ideation session, presentation of the data obtained in the previous sessions, and finally a concluding experimentation session.

## WELCOMING & PRESENTATION

**LENGTH:** 25 minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** presentation, envelope

**OVERVIEW:** throughout the first part of the meeting, a face-to-face presentation was given, introducing the topic of the project as well as some examples of best practices from around the world and the initial concept of the Bakery. The case studies were examples mostly concerning the category "A New Economy," as the focus of the meeting was rather on the more strategic and economic aspect of the bakery. The other two axes, community and environment, had in fact been the focus of the previous meetings.

**OUTCOME:** there was no particular feedback in this first part of the session except for some questions for the better understanding of the project.



## IN 2050 IN THE UPPER VALLEY - IDEATION SESSION

**LENGTH:** 15 minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** "What if in 2050 ... in the Upper Stura Valley."

**OVERVIEW:** The first exercise proposed to the administrators was an exercise similar to the first activity suggested to the residents about the Valley of Desires and the Valley of Needs. However, rather to achieve more compelling results and help the administrators move away from the current situation, they were asked to imagine the Upper Valley in 2050. Following a personal brainstorming session, they proceeded to present their ideas and pin their personal bullet points on the collective poster. In ideation sessions are often used the service scenarios: visual or textual stories telling how people will interact in a service. A simple prompt to service scenario is to ask "what if..?" which helps to imagine a future change. Usually this sessions aim to generate a huge number of ideas at a very high concept level (Foglieni et Al., 2018).

**OUTCOME:** Some of the key points raised were: the creation of new cultural spaces and the renovation of currently unused spaces, the merging of the three municipalities in the Upper Valley into one major administration, an increase in sustainable businesses, more youth investment, the opening of a daycare center and family services, centralized and reverse flow purchasing groups, and a national park. Finally, the need for infrastructure improvements and ideas to promote biodiversity and sustainable tourism were mentioned.

The main target of this activity was to understand the administrators' vision and see if and how it matched those proposed by residents and tourists. Participants showed considerable openness and willingness toward the first proposed activity. Some maintained a concrete approach anchored in the current situation, while others were rather more idealistic in their visions.

Fig.100 A participant pinning on the common poster their vision  
Fig.101 A participant writing on the card their vision for 2050  
Fig.102 Focus of some ideas emerged on the common poster  
Photos by Isabella Beltrandi



Fig.100



Fig.101

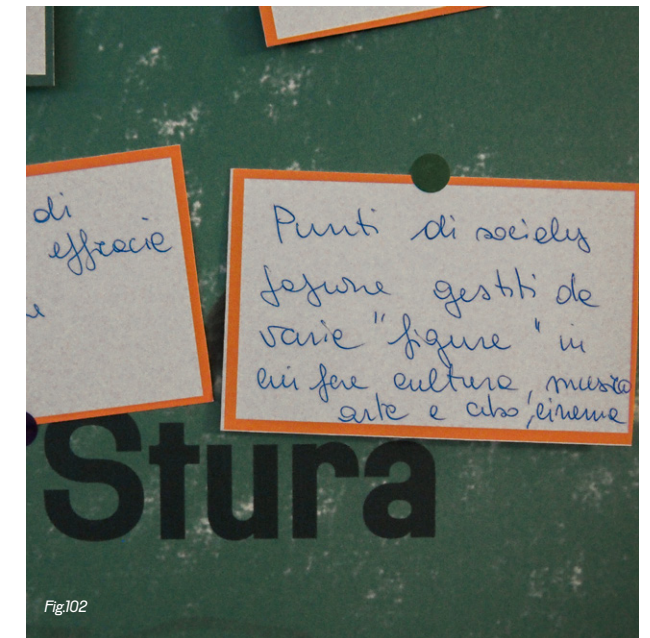


Fig.102



## COFFEE BREAK & DATA PRESENTATION

**LENGTH:** 15 minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** set up of boundary objects used in previous sessions

**OVERVIEW:** Over a coffee break, served with some brioches prepared by the presenter, participants were introduced to some of the major data gathered during the previous co-design sessions together with residents, vacationers and tourists of the Upper Stura Valley. Regarding the residents: the desire for a social gathering space where they can meet, the need for a better public transportation service and the requirement for a stable internet connection, and finally at the top of the essential services a greater presence of childcare services. For vacationers and tourists, meanwhile, the need for an efficient public transportation service and a working internet connection was again presented. As well as a desire to have a more active part within the local community and a more genuine connection to that community.

**OUTCOME:** While presenting the data collected from the workshops with tourists, some tension and disorientation was noted, perhaps due to the strong concentration of resources on the tourism sector by the administrations, while no further remarks were received on residents' requests.

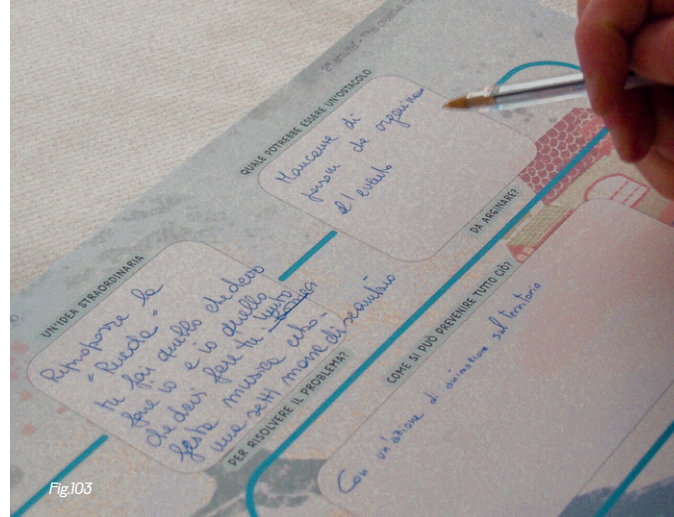


Fig.103



Fig.104



Fig.105

Fig.103 Focus of a "Creative Relay" map

Fig.104 A participant writing on the "Creative Relay" map

Fig.105 The facilitator presenting the data collected during the previous sessions

Photos by Isabella Beltrandi



## THE CREATIVE RELAY - PROTOTYPING SESSION

**LENGTH:** 20minutes

**BOUNDARY OBJECTS:** The Creative Relay

**OVERVIEW:** on the basis of the feedback received in the first exercise and previous co-design sessions, a third and final exercise was proposed to the administrators. This involved the co-design of some services previously mentioned in the workshop and deemed somewhat more crucial by the community. Called "the relay" this activity is similar to an athletic relay, where each participant has a "baton" that he passes on to the next at the end of his turn. The baton in this case is a map provided at the beginning, with some suggestions to steer the design. It begins collectively by deciding on the type of service to be planned. Then each participant completes a suggestion on the map individually and passes it on to the next person. This process continues to the last stage, where collectively a solution is sought for the proposed issues. Five "how could we..." suggestions were chosen for the relay race: improving transportation, creating a dialogue/ collaboration between tourists and residents, building a center of essential services to the population, bringing to life a gathering center, and creating a partnership of km0 products between Italy and France.

Rather creative solutions included the ideas of developing a transportation sharing network, inspired by the model of the municipality of Dolceacqua, where residents use a station with a sign to indicate their travel schedules in the city and offer rides to

those who need them; Establishing the "Festival of the Mountain People," where for one week a year tourists and residents pair up while learning about each other's lives. All handled by professional facilitators who can foster the relationship between the two; and finally, the establishment of an itinerant service of essential services through the use of highly equipped minibuses for the service delivered. Create a network of professionals willing to deliver the services, such as retired doctors.

**OUTCOME:** Original and creative ideas emerged in the concluding stage, especially for services initially considered to be somewhat more complex to address. Perhaps it was precisely the challenge presented by such issues that stimulated participants to think innovatively, prompting them to explore unconventional solutions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the workshop highlighted different modes of approach among the participants, demonstrating some very pragmatic and some rather more idealistic visions, yet the workshop was able to stimulate unexpected creativity in outlining solutions for issues initially considered challenging and quite hostile by the participants.



# Insights and learnings

*Fig. 106 A detail of the card offered to workshop participants with residents. Photo by Elena Curti*



The 4 co-design sessions held with the Upper Stura Valley community were an important moment of confrontation between the author and the different realities that animate the area. Despite the prior knowledge concerning the dynamics associated with living this area, due to the local origins of the author of the research, the co-design sessions were crucial for a stronger understanding of the social fabric of the area, obtaining a rather detailed and deeper vision of the local context.

The main purpose of the different sessions was to evolve a preliminary concept concerning the bakery shop of Pietrapozzo, as a reference point for basic necessities and as a social gathering place. The sessions aimed to capture the daily challenges of the resident community, the potential offered by the area (tourists), and eventually identify together with the local administrations how to develop or implement the needs that emerged.

Hence, the data obtained during the workshops were crucial to the understanding of the overall picture and allowed the initial proposal of the Bakery to be refined and synthesized, orienting it in a rather appropriate way toward the needs from the local

community and from the point of view of administrative feasibility. Setting the foundation for the development of a comprehensive product-service system.

The analysis specifically brought to light some obvious data and insights that allowed the identification of recurring patterns and established some key points for the development of the final offering.

First and foremost, at different times and in the context of different workshops, the need for social gathering centers freely available to the population in their free time emerged, a space where cultural, social, educational and recreational-creative activities could be promoted and coordinated. Indeed, this necessity is fully within the values of the Bakery, which wishes, precisely, to present itself as a place of sociability. As such, it represents a datum on which to work and be able to best develop into the final proposition of the Bakery. Subsequently, a strong need for an essential service offer to the population stands out, confirming the need for a service center, with a main demand in childcare and health services.



Finally, a strongly discussed aspect is related to infrastructure improvement, with a particular focus on internet connection and public transportation service. However, concerning these two final points, the author glimpses difficulties and perplexities being issues that stray from the project's theme and on which specific chapters and sections would need to be implemented to find a suitable solution. Nonetheless, these points open the door to the intention of creating an inclusive and cooperative system among different parts of the community, fostering the emergence of bottom-up initiatives and self-management by the people. With fertile ground, initiatives such as those proposed during the co-design session together with the administrations of citizen groups organized in a transportation self-management service (see Creative Relay) could emerge. As a result, this project, could offer itself as a starting point for building a more collaborative social fabric.

Throughout the course of the workshops, the facilitator, was able to notice a number of clues that could be described as latent. In other words, evidence that emerged by observing participants' behaviors and through subsequent analysis. These data, which were particularly found during the workshop conducted with residents, revealed a certain resistance to open confrontation, as well as perceptions of abandonment and skepticism toward change. This attitude of reservation and hostility appeared from the first moments of organization of the workshops, for instance, consider the invitation phase during which it was very

complicated to get the residents involved in the project.

Moreover, the moods, described above, were equally observed by the holidaymakers who during the meeting held for them stated that they noticed a certain widespread discontent in the resident community, due mostly, according to them, to an exclusion by the administrations in the decision-making processes. In addition, they notice a certain reluctance in accepting help or opinions from the vacationers themselves, who for the sake of the area would be willing to provide their resources and skills.

These attitudes, turn out to be crucial data in understanding the area and constitute the starting point for some subsequent design choices. In fact, they stand as revelatory of a due restoration of an active and inclusive citizenship in the Upper Valley territory, and will be concretized in the next design stages through the help of some strategies of cooperation within the Bakery system.

Based on the last points described, there is an opportunity to implement in the service a professional figure, such as a cultural mediator, who will take charge of mediation between the different parts of the community (Residents, Holidaymakers and Tourists, and Administrations). Thus promoting a rather inclusive society, open to dialogue and change, and increased participation in community life. Among other things, this offer emerged during the meeting with the administrations of the Upper Valley, which saw in the perspective of a fair and positive relationship between residents and tourists, the

need for a management through the employment of a professional figure, precisely, capable of mediating different cultures.

Regarding the organization and conduct of the workshops, some difficulties were encountered mainly in the organization phase. As described above, it was very difficult for organizers to get participants to join in, especially the categories of residents and administrations, who were rather skeptical about attending. Indeed, for instance, until the x-day the researcher was unsure of the exact number of participants attending the workshop; in fact, only a few had confirmed participation and many were left in doubt. Although people who had not previously communicated their participation showed up at the workshop, causing, consequently, some problems in the organization and especially in the previous preparation of the boundary objects that had been prepared for 10 people and not 15, the final number of participants. Similar situation occurred with the workshop with the administrations, as not everyone had confirmed their attendance despite the reminder from the facilitator. However, it was still possible to carry out all the activities, with a simple change in the use of boundary objects. Additionally, during the workshop with the residents some vacationers joined in, however, they were not allowed to participate in the activities as they would have biased the results helpful to the research.

At the end, the workshop proved to be very participatory and allowed for many useful perspectives for the final research, however, it is useful to be prepared for sudden last-minute changes that may alter the number of participants, both negatively and positively.

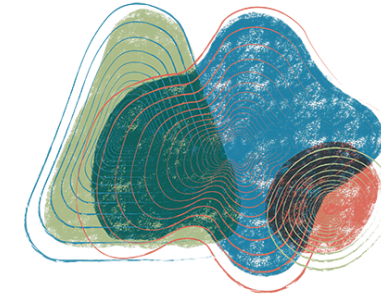
Another useful learning for upcoming co-design experiences is to opt for rather smaller working groups. Especially in case of people being less open to discussion, so that it is possible to create a rather safer environment where people feel comfortable to share their ideas.

Finally, it is useful to take note of the fact that activities often tend to take longer than what was set during the planning stage. This is due to several factors, some reasons in this case being: moving large groups of people from one activity to another takes longer, as does explaining the activity itself and later allowing everyone to comment, generating debates and comparisons with other participants. For instance, during the workshop with administrators, it has been necessary rather more than once to stop the conversation, although extremely relevant, in order to move on to the performance of subsequent activities for which there would have been no time otherwise. Thus, in the future, it is useful to rely in organizing the extra time due to these moments of confrontation or simply passing between activities.



# LEAVENING

## DEVELOPMENT



### 7. LA BIGA

### 8. PROTOTYPING

### 9. CONCLUSIONS

In the design phase, the concept of the service is refined and enriched with detail. This stage is dedicated to developing the comprehensive components of the service system, ensuring that all necessary elements are in place to deliver and facilitate the intended experience. [Foglieni et al., 2018]

In the next stage, the bakery's final service system is carefully detailed, including the system structure, user interactions, functionality, and services provided.



07.

LA BIGA

THE UPPER VALLEY BAKERY

Fig. 107 Rye sourdough (Biga). Photo by the Author



“THIS ORGANISM TEACHES US THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE, SURPRISING US WITH ITS VARIABLE REACTIONS TO THE SEASONS AND INDOOR TEMPERATURES, AND BECOMING A REAL COMPANION.”

*(Farah Keram, 2023)*

TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR

## Introduction

The previous chapters observed how bread, such a basic, daily food, holds a significant social and symbolic dimension, transforming itself from a simple nourishment to a vehicle of values and community. Moreover, it has been explored in previous chapters how the social value attributed to a group of people can not only emerge but also crystallize into creative and effective solutions for a better way of life, laying the foundation for meaningful social innovations.

Accordingly, in this chapter, the author chooses to explore the possible link between the art of baking and the spirit of community creation, both in terms of values and processes. In this exploration, one stage of bread-making specifically caught the researcher's attention, becoming the very name of the project because of the profound meaning it embodies: the creation of mother dough, in Italian “Biga”.

Subsequently, the final service offering designed for the Pietraporzio Bakery is presented, which is envisioned as a multifunctional center located in the Upper Stura Valley of

Demonte, offering a diverse but complementary range of services essential to the village life. In addition to serving as a store for basic necessities, it takes on a cultural and social role, inviting residents and tourists to share social moments and engage in active community building. The participation of individuals in the management and organization of the Bakery is strongly encouraged, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

The final offering is detailed using specific Service Design tools (see Chapter 3). These tools allow for in-depth analysis of the project's offerings, its value proposition, and the interactions among the various actors and processes involved. Although the project contemplates a variety of possibilities, these maps and diagrams focus primarily on a few examples that represent the most obvious cases. Furthermore, the three core values on which the project is based and how these are integrated and preserved within the entire system are examined.



# La Biga

## THE MEANING

As previously observed (see Chapter 5), bread has a strong social and symbolic dimension, a value that goes beyond just being a staple food. However, throughout this thesis, it has also been seen how, often, the social value of a group of people can foster the emergence of new perspectives and materialize into creative and effective solutions for a better lifestyle (see Social Innovation).

Thus, it could be argued that the art of bread-making and the spirit of community creation are not so far apart; rather, they have more similarities than one might think, both in terms of quality of values and process stages. Inspired by this metaphor, the author of the research wanted to deepen this reflection, letting the different stages of the bread-making process guide the development of this research and, consequently, the identification of a possible solution aimed at the Pietraporzio

Bakery, the territory in which it is located and its community. In this reflection, one phase particularly stuck in the eyes of the researcher, becoming the very name of the project precisely because of the profound value of its meaning: the making of sourdough, in Italian “Biga.”

Bread making consists of a series of simple but extremely precise actions. However, being a natural and living process, a multitude of actions can alter its result: environment, temperature and choice of ingredients are among the more important choices for a good result. Only three ingredients are needed to make bread: flour, water and salt. The choice of these materials is what will guarantee the final quality of our bread, and consequently it is crucial. Similarly in creating a community, people with different experiences, skills and backgrounds are the starting point for building a rich and singular community.



Fig. 108



Fig. 109



Fig. 110

From the combination of flour with water, sourdough is created, which is the component that allows the dough to rise. This is made possible by the presence of bacteria and yeast that are naturally present in flour, water and the air we breathe. When combined together they create gases that initiate the fermentation of bread and make it digestible. While in the case of bread making, the bonds create the gluten and make the dough elastic and cohesive; in a community, on the other hand, it is the connections and relationships that are created among the different actors involved that similarly constitute the resilience and strength of the group.

Fig.108-109-110 Bread making process. Photos by Juan Garcia Couder





Fig. 111

This type of dough is commonly referred to as indirect process and in the language of baking is called “Sourdough” or starter, in Italian “Biga.” The adjective indirect is due to its long resting times, during which the action of fermentation takes place. Similarly, a community grows through interaction and collaboration among its members, but also through their patience and constant investment. Moreover, only after a period of time can the positive effects of a community be seen.

Beyond its chemical characteristics, the Biga is often preferred over the direct method (in which the ingredients are all mixed together) because it gives the final product some specific characteristics. First, we notice differences in taste, characterized by a sour flavor and a broad richness in aromas. In addition, due to the presence of bacteria, bread made with sourdough is rather easier to digest and allows better assimilation of fiber and vitamins. As well as greater crispness, fragrance, greater resistance to contaminants and better preservation over time. In summary, it can be said that Biga gives bread an added value.



Fig. 112

Based on this last point, this project wants to present itself in the same way as the Biga as a value-added provider and be the starter of a community-building process. La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery, wants to be the starting point for the regeneration of these lands, helping the community recreate a cohesive social fabric. In fact, in the author's opinion built on the research conducted: collaboration and cooperation among the different parts of the community, in close connection with the territory and through a new economy are the key to the future of these places.

Fig. 111 Rye sourdough (Biga)  
Fig. 112 Bread made with the rye sourdough  
Photos by the author.



# Final Service Offer

## LA BIGA - THE UPPER VALLEY BAKERY

La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery represents a multifunctional center located in the Upper Stura Valley of Demonte, offering a diverse but complementary range of essential services crucial to village life. Its identity is rooted in the local area and the people who inhabit it. In addition to serving as a store for essential goods, it assumes a relevant role as a cultural and social hub, inviting residents and tourists to share social moments and engage in building an active community. The participation of individuals in the management and organization of the Bakery is strongly encouraged, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.

The Bakery's offerings are based primarily on the Economy of Purpose economic model, taking advantage of its versatility and the presence of a wide range of services within a single space. This approach promotes significant sustainability both economically and environmentally by using a single facility that efficiently shares resources, including space, energy, and common expenses. This strategy results in significant energy and financial savings. Thus, playing a key role in environmental and economic sustainability. The Bakery community is composed of the area's key visitors, including upper valley residents, vacationers, and short tourists, each playing a key role in the operation of the Bakery, contributing uniquely and crucially to its vitality.



Fig. 113 Axonometry showing the services offered by La Biga.  
Illustration by the author.



THE ESSENTIAL SHOP

PRIMARY OFFER

- Bakery
- Grocery store
- Café
- Newsstand
- Tabacco Store
- Stationery shop
- Hardware store
- Parcel pickup

SECONDARY OFFER

- Home delivery service
- Quality and Km0 products
- Retailer of transalpine products
- Food boxes
- Discounts on local products
- Old food at low price

TERTIARY OFFER

- Zero waste strategies
- Promote to buy local product
- Short supply chain products
- Within a radius of 60km
- Backs ethical production chain

THE CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

Cultural Snack

- shows (music/theater)
- book/project showcases
- roundtables
- reading labs
- expo

Library

- book loan
- trainings
- loan objects
- ludotheque
- screening

Happy-hour DIY

- creation of collective works
- craft workshops
- cooking labs

Outdoor Bakery

- family-friendly activities
- land conservation activities
- flea markets
- didactic hikes
- sports groups

- Youth leisure activities
- Community gathering place
- Local experience

- Safeguarding traditions
- Cultural enrichment
- Intergenerational connections
- Discovery of the territory
- Tackles technological disparity
- Skills enrichment

THE MINI-HUB

2/WEEK

Children's services

- baby-sitting
- baby-parking
- homework help
- after-school

1/WEEK

Health services

- doctor
- psychologist
- nurse
- fisiotherapist
- medicine retailer

1/MONTH

Repair services

- artisans
- gardener
- plumber
- electrician

1/YEAR

Financial services

- consultant
- insurer

VARIABLE FREQUENCY

Hygiene services

- hairdresser
- aesthetician

Community-provided services

- non-professional services offered by the "Mani in Pasta" association

- Comms board
- Upper Valley magazine
- Membership program
- Shared agenda
- Hiring of a facilitator
- Guest house
- Discounts on services

- Supports young families
- New job opportunities
- Encourages cooperation
- Elderly care
- Fertile ground for new citizens
- Tourist-resident mediation
- Fosters community openness



# What to find at la Biga

## THE BAKERY'S OFFERINGS

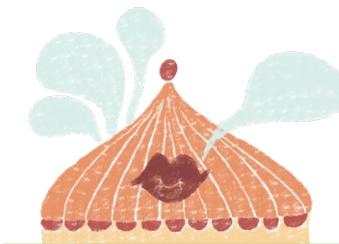
The Bakery offers a set of primary services to the local population, the main macro-services provided are the Essential Store, the Services Mini-Hub, and a cultural and social space.



### THE ESSENTIAL SHOP

7/7

The store offers basic necessities such as groceries, a bakery and a coffee shop. Aim to ensure basic essentials to the upper valley residents, at a close range.



### THE CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

7/7

The Chit-chat House is a community hub offering books, board games, organising cultural events, educational classes, and workshops to foster a sense of community.



### THE MINI-HUB

VARIABLE FREQUENCY

The Mini-hub offers essential services across various fields to enhance local quality life of the upper valley residents.

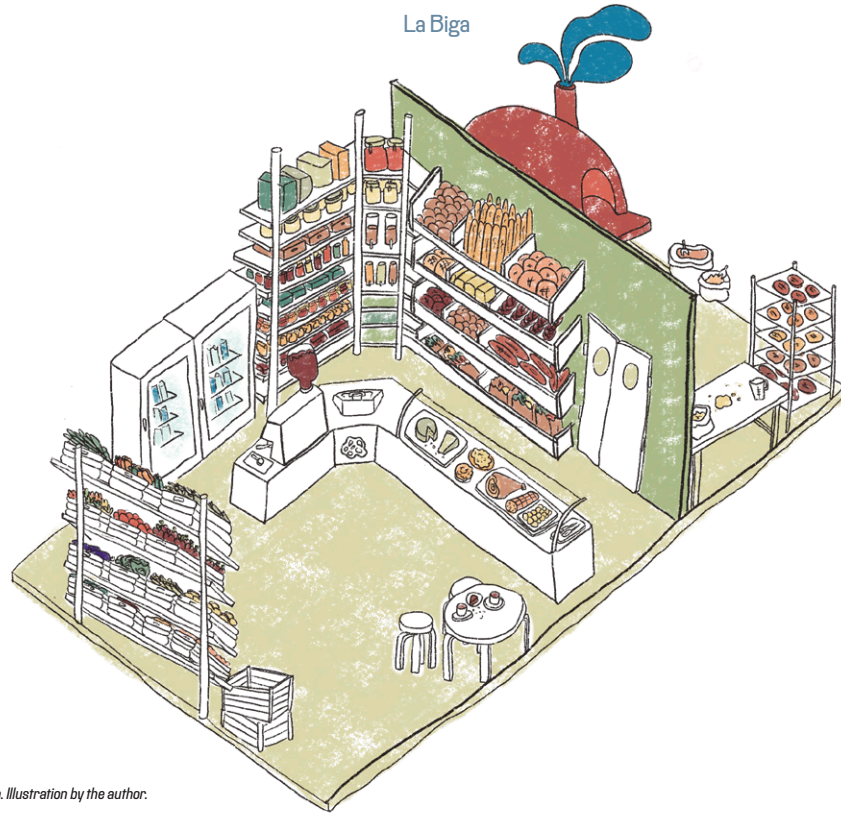
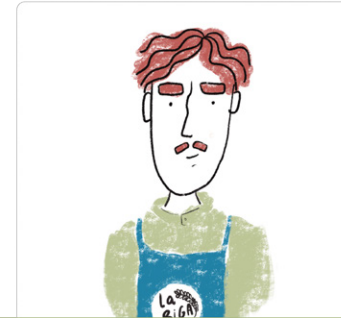


Fig. 116 View of the Essential Shop. Illustration by the author.

## THE ESSENTIAL SHOP

The Essential Store is a convenience store that offers a selection of essential goods to meet the daily needs of the customers. The Essential Store's offerings include basic products such as groceries, bread, personal care products, household cleaning items, hygiene items, and services such as a coffee shop, newsstand, tobacco shop, and parcel pickup service. This store is designed to quickly and cheaply provide essential items that people need in their daily lives. Its presence is vital to the local community, providing easy access to basic products without the need to travel to more distant locations.

Moreover, the role of the essential store is to act as a promoter and protector of the local area, which is why the products on the shelves are quality products sourced from local producers located within a 60-km radius. Furthermore, this range enables cooperation with the French territory, only 30 km away from the bakery shop. Remaining committed to environmental sustainability, the store prepares daily boxes of old food sold at half price in addition to boxes of fresh local goods. In this way, policies and strategies are implemented to address food waste. Finally, a home delivery service of basic necessities is provided.



### THE BAKERY MANAGER

MAURO

Management

Goods production

Quality control

Customer service

#### THE BAKERY MANAGER

The essential store is managed by the Bakery Manager. His task within the store is to take care of several activities that are essential to the daily operation and success of the store. Among these activities is the production of bakery and grocery products, ensuring their quality. In addition, he manages customer service, contact with local producers, and handles the financial management of the bakery. Finally, he develops marketing strategies and promotions to attract new customers and retain existing ones, which may include advertising, special offers, and social media presence.



### THE LOCAL PRODUCER

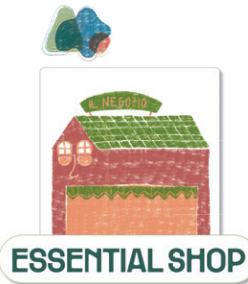
Short supply chain

Freshness and quality

Collaboration

#### THE LOCAL PRODUCER

Local producers play a crucial role in the success and sustainability of the Shop by providing fresh, high-quality ingredients. By working directly with local farmers and suppliers, the bakery not only supports the local economy, but also ensures a short supply chain, which means ingredients travel less distance, maintaining their freshness and reducing environmental impact. In addition, this partnership allows the Bakery to offer customers unique products that reflect local flavors and traditions, helping to create a stronger connection with the local community and promote a more sustainable lifestyle.



DISCOVERY

Get to know

Arriving

User actions

The client finds out about the Essential Shop at La Biga – Panetteria di Alta Valle

Enter the store

Touch-points



INTERACTION LINE

Front stage Actions

- Bakery Manager
- Cultural Facilitator
- Contributor

welcomes the customer

VISIBILITY LINE

Back stage Actions

- Bakery Manager
- Cultural Facilitator
- Contributor

advertises for the store

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

Support Processes

- Administrations
- Local Producer

funds advertising

supply raw materials

Fig. 116 Service Blueprint of the Essential Shop. Design by the author.



SERVICE

Before

While

After

approaches the counter and orders

on a small table of the chit-chat house consume the order

The customer goes to the cashier and pays the bill

the customer serves the products on display

goes to the counter and orders more products



INTERACTION LINE

serves the customer

changes the bills

VISIBILITY LINE

applies discounts for members.

help the B.M. in the production and management

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

funds to cover the discounts

agreement with B.M.

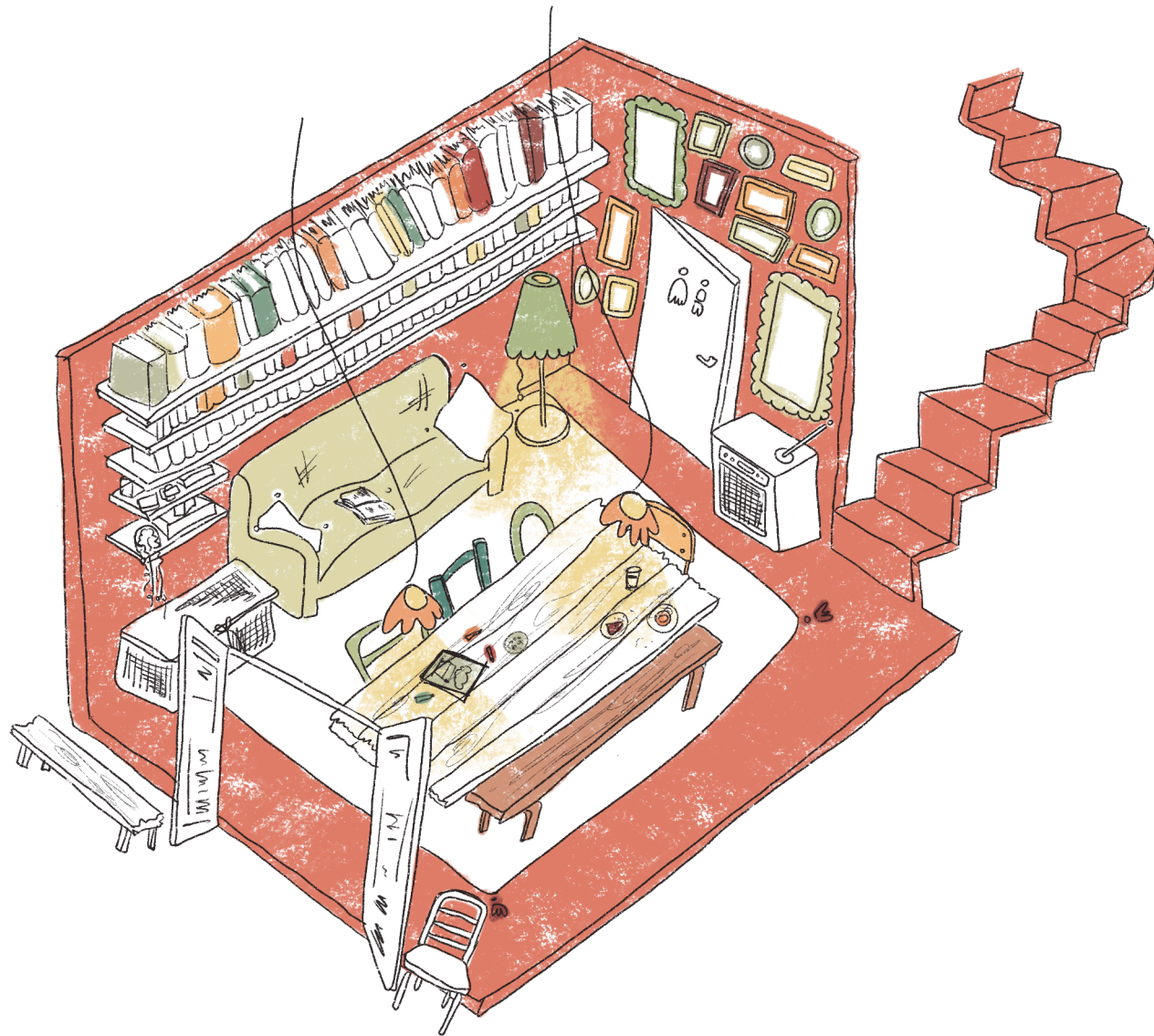


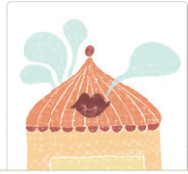
Fig. 117 View of the Chit-chat house. Illustration by the author.



## THE CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

Finally, the Chit-chat Bakery, goes beyond simply offering products, transforming itself into a social and cultural reference point where people can share experiences, learn, create, and feel an integral part of the community. The Bakery provides a wide selection of books and board games to encourage reading, learning and leisure within the community.

It organizes cultural events that may include film screenings, documentaries, book presentations or other activities that contribute to the sharing of ideas and cultural enrichment, and offers trainings to develop technical or language skills, providing learning opportunities for those who wish to expand their knowledge. It also provides the space and resources to organize craft and cooking workshops promoting creativity and enabling people to explore the culinary and cultural traditions of the area.



CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

DISCOVERY

Get to know

Booking

User actions

The client finds out about the proposed activity at the Chit-chat house

registers to attend the activity

Touch-points



INTERACTION LINE

Front stage Actions

- Bakery Manager
- Cultural Facilitator
- Guest speaker

refer the client to the C.F.

helps the customer register

VISIBILITY LINE

Back stage Actions

- Bakery Manager
- Cultural Facilitator
- Guest Speaker

organize activities with the C.F. advertises the activities

organize activities with the B.M.

sends the number of registrations to the G.S.

proposes to hold an activity

G.S. receives the number of participants

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

Support Processes

- Administrations
- Local Producer

hire guest speakers

funds advertising



ACTIVITY

Before

While

After

shows up at the time and place where the activity takes place

participates in the activity

The customer pays for the activity and benefits from other services offered by the Bakery



INTERACTION LINE

welcomes the customer

serves the customers at bakery's café

welcomes the customer

makes sure everything is going well

receives payment for the activity (if any)

welcomes the customer

VISIBILITY LINE

provides the Chit-chat room

ensures inclusive activity participation

manages the flow of money among the staff

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

pays the guest speakers

provides local and quality goods



## THE MINI-HUB

The Mini-hub is a center that provides a diverse range of proximity and support services to meet the needs of the local community. This space is designed to provide crucial services in a variety of fields, thus helping to improve the quality of life for residents. Initiatives of the Mini-hub take place in one of the bakery room provided especially for this purpose.

Some of the common services within the mini-hub include:

### CHILDCARE SERVICES (2/WEEK)

Provides assistance and support to parents with dedicated services for children such as daycare, play activities, and specialized counseling.

### PERSONAL CARE SERVICES (1/WEEK)

Provides services focused on individual wellness, including beauty treatments, massages, and other personal care activities.

### HEALTH SERVICES (1/WEEK)

Provides basic medical care services, such as periodic checkups, distribution of essential medicines, or consultations with health professionals, such as psychologist or physiotherapist.

### REPAIR SERVICES (VARIABLE FREQUENCY)

Includes repair and maintenance services for household goods and items, such as home appliances, electronic equipment, or small tools.

### FINANCIAL SERVICES (VARIABLE FREQUENCY)

Provides basic financial support, such as financial counseling, access to banking services, or assistance in managing the household budget.

### SERVICES OFFERED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY(VARIABLE FREQUENCY)

Non-professional services offered by the local community.



## THE FACILITATOR

ALICE

Intermediary

Coordinator

Companion

Promoter

### THE CULTURAL FACILITATOR

While its management is assigned to a cultural facilitator: a consultant hired by the Vepp Valle Stura Association, a key local administrative partner of the project. The cultural facilitator within the mini services hub plays a key role in facilitating communication and understanding between the different cultures present in the community. Their responsibilities range from facilitating communication to providing easy access to services for all members of the community, regardless of their age, linguistic or cultural background.

The main activities carried out by the cultural facilitator are to ensure that all information about the services is clear and understandable to all and actively works to create an inclusive environment where all people, regardless of their involvement in the local area and their role in the local community, feel welcome

and respected. The facilitator works with service providers to tailor offerings to the specific needs of the community, ensuring their functioning and accessibility. Finally, they provide one-on-one support to those who need help accessing services or integrating into the local environment.

To sum up, the cultural mediator in the services mini-hub plays a crucial role in ensuring that services are accessible, welcoming and culturally sensitive for all community members. Their presence helps to create an inclusive environment that meets the needs of a diverse population.



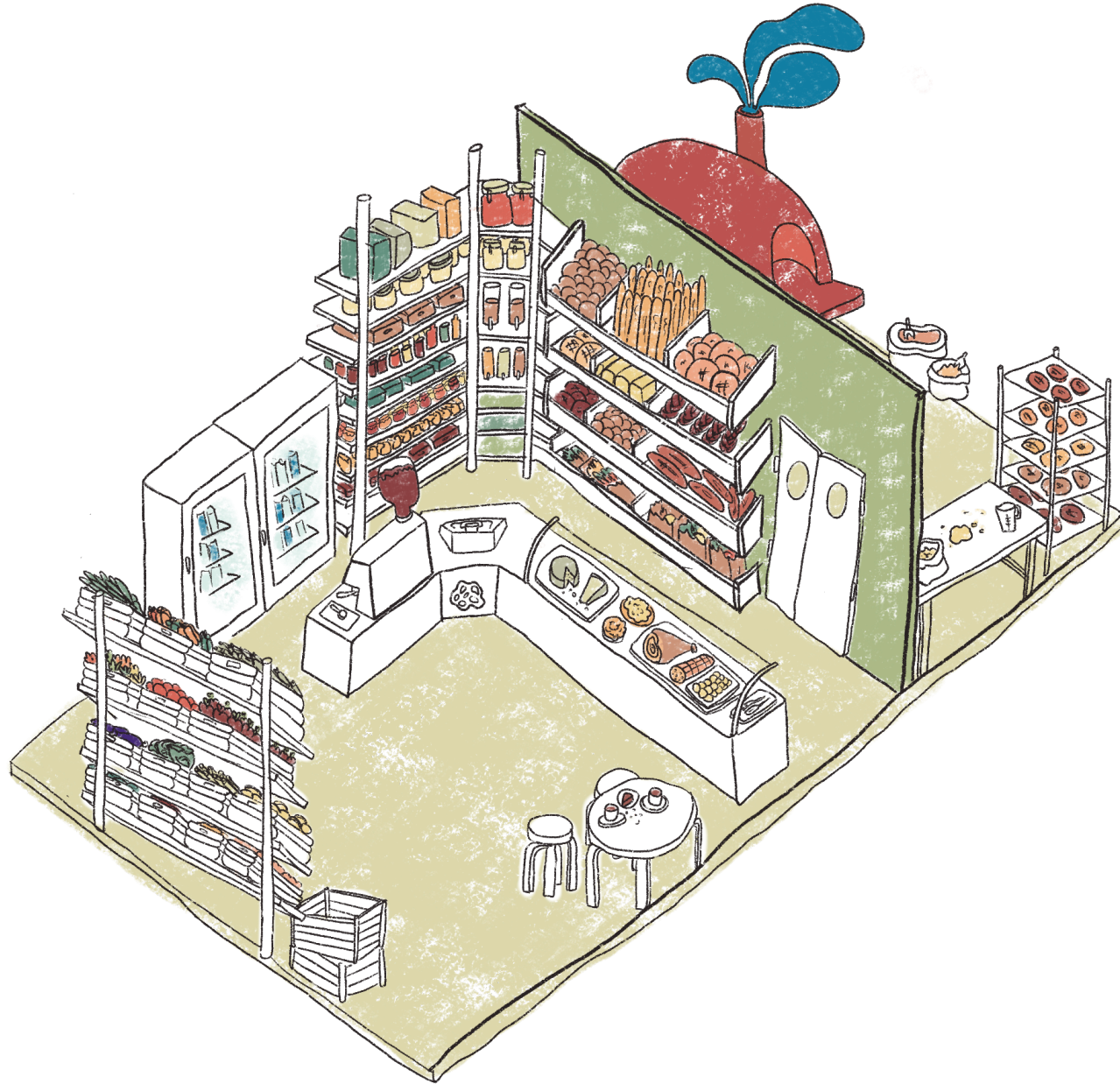


Fig. 119 View of the Mini Hub of services. Illustration by the author.



## THE SERVICE PROVIDER

Practitioner

Qualified

Independent

### THE SERVICE PROVIDER

Mini-hub services are provided by qualified, independent freelancers who offer specialized skills to increase support within the community. These professionals add values to the mini-hub by providing specific services based on their expertise and training. Each freelancer offers customized services within their area of expertise. For example, there might be educators, financial counselors, beauticians, plumbers, electricians, or other professionals in the fields offered by the mini-hub. Although they are independent professionals, they collaborate closely with the mini-hub to integrate their services into the overall range offered by the facility.

Collaboration is essential to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to community needs. However, they can offer services flexibly, adapting to the needs of the community and ensuring adequate availability to respond to specific requests.

The presence of the services mini-hub and its workers is crucial to the economic sustainability of the bakery, as it diversifies the service offerings, attracting a wider customer base and stimulating economic activity, not only of the bakery itself, but of the area. In addition, by actively participating in the life of the community and offering their experience and expertise, suppliers support the local environment and contribute to the growth and vibrancy of its community.



### DISCOVERY

Get to know

Booking

User actions

The customer finds out about the availability of a service at the mini-hub

registers for participation of the desired service

Touch-points

THE BAKERY  
PORTA DI VALLE  
PASSES BY CHANCE  
WOM  
UPPER VALLEY MAGAZINE  
ADVERTISEMENT

THE BAKERY  
PHONE CALL  
COMMS BOARD  
ATTENDANCE CALENDAR

INTERACTION LINE

Front stage Actions

Bakery Manager  
Cultural Facilitator  
Service Provider

refer the client to the C.F.

helps the customer register

VISIBILITY LINE

Back stage Actions

Bakery Manager  
Cultural Facilitator  
Service Provider

advertises the services

ensures service awareness and access

sends the number of participants to the S.P.

proposes to hold a service

receives the number of participants

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

Support Processes

Administrations  
Foundations  
Local Producer

funds advertising



### SERVICE

Before

While

After

The client shows up at the time and place of service delivery

Benefits from the service

Pays for the service and eventually benefits from the essential store

THE BAKERY  
MINI-HUB ROOM  
PRIVATE SPACE OF S.P.

SPECIFIC TOUCH-POINTS DEPENDING ON THE SERVICE

THE ESSENTIAL SHOP  
PAYMENT

INTERACTION LINE

welcomes the customer

serves the customers at Essential Shop

welcomes the customer

ensures everything went well

welcomes the customer

carries out the service

receive payments from customers

VISIBILITY LINE

calendar organization together with C.F.

adapts services to community needs

facilitates clear communication for all

co-organized service with C.F.

applies discounts for members.

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

municipalities cover room rent

funds to cover the discounts

invests in the displacement of services



# Inside the Bakery

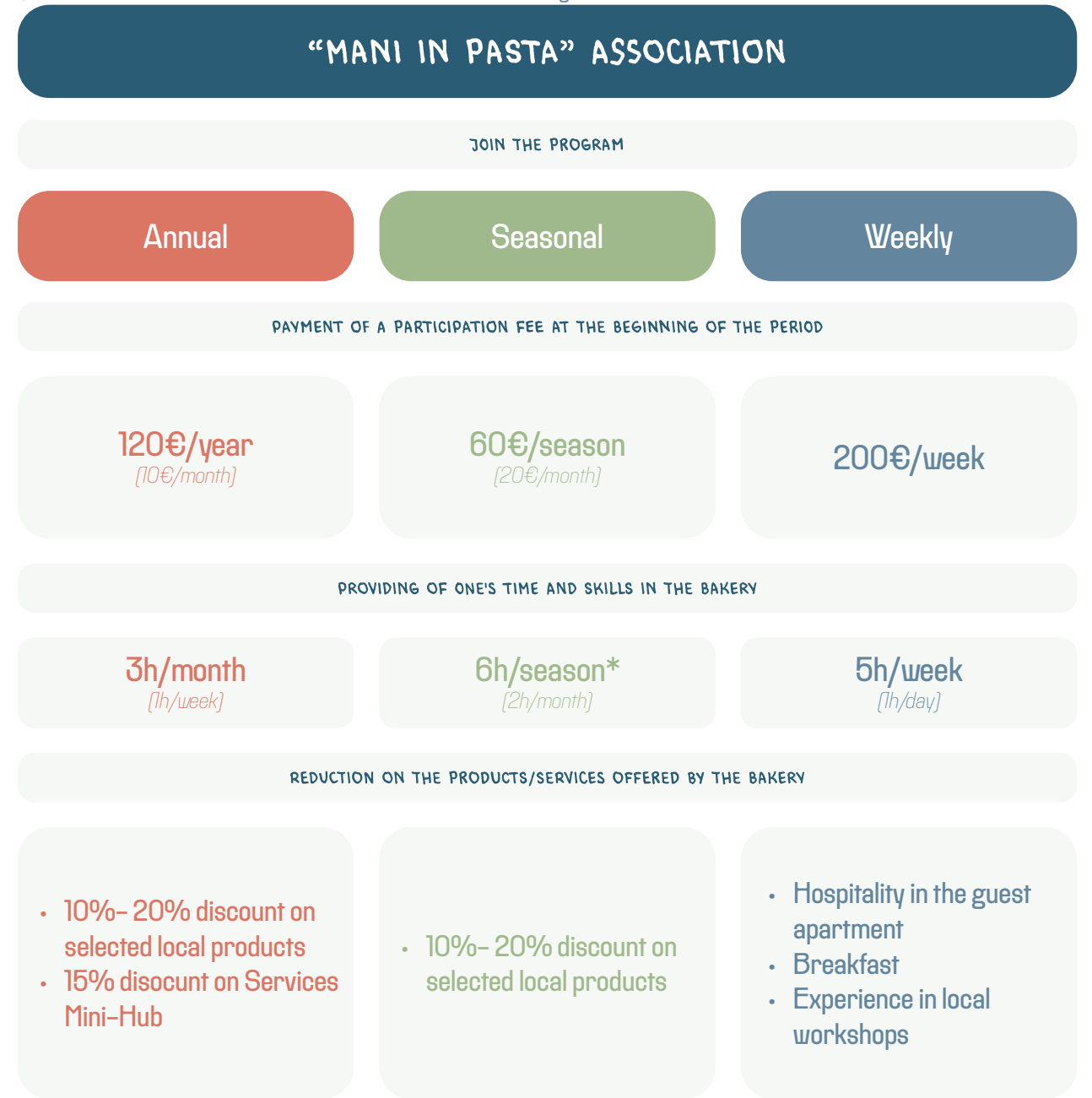
## THE “MANI IN PASTA” ASSOCIATION

The functioning of the Bakery is based on its inherent collaborative and social nature. By encouraging the different categories of visitors to the Upper Valley, to actively participate in the organization and decisions that affect the operation of the store. This involvement is facilitated through the economic model of the Agricultural Support Communities (CSAs), in which all members devote a portion of their time to running the community emporium or caring for the cultivated land.

In The Bakery's instance, concerned users, can actively participate in this drive by becoming members of the “Mani in Pasta” association. The association offers three types of subscriptions: Annual, Seasonal, and Weekly, each suited to a different target group of the local community: residents, vacationers, and short tourists.

Members of the association are encouraged to actively participate in life at the Bakery, contributing to the management and organization of the services offered. This involvement may involve working in the store, the mini-hub, or organizing events in the Chiacchericcia Bakery. In return for active involvement, members receive discounts on local products, mini-hub services and other specific benefits depending on the program chosen. The association aims to promote collective participation, intergenerational collaboration, and economic and environmental sustainability. It also enhances local resources and creates a strong bond between the community and the Bakery.

Fig. 121 Membership explanation graph of the Association.  
Design by the author.





### THE ANNUAL PROGRAM

The Annual Program is designed primarily for Upper Valley residents and those vacationers who spend a considerable amount of time in the area throughout the year. With this program, the members are encouraged to become active participants in the management and organization of the Bakery, contributing to its development and to maintaining the revitalization of the area.

The Annual Program involves a membership fee of €120 for the entire 12-month duration, equivalent to €10 per month.

Associates, are required to devote at least 3 hours per month to collaboration at the Bakery. This involvement can relate to services offered by the Essential Store, Mini-hub or Chit-chat Bakery. In exchange for their participation and collaboration, Annual Program members enjoy several benefits, including: discounts on a selection of local products available in the Bakery and reductions on services offered by the mini-hub.

This engagement model promotes collaboration among Association members, creating a stronger bond between the Bakery and the community. It also provides an opportunity for residents and vacationers to enjoy special discounts on local products and services, making membership in the program a win-win investment for both parties.

### THE SEASONAL PROGRAM

The Seasonal Program aims to actively engage vacationers during the summer season and peak visitor periods. Although it requires less time commitment than the Annual Program, it offers participants the opportunity to contribute to the life of the Bakery in a meaningful way during the peak season periods (which runs from mid-June to mid-September, including Christmas vacations).

The fee for participation in the Seasonal Program is 60€ per season, equivalent to 20€ per month. Seasonal Program members are required to commit at least 6 hours of cooperation during the entire season in one of the different services in the Bakery. In exchange for participation and collaboration, Seasonal Program associates enjoy some discounts on a selection of local products available in the Bakery.

Through this model, the participation of vacationers in the management and organization of the Bakery is encouraged, allowing them to feel like active citizens of the local community. In addition, benefits offered such as discounts on local products encourage the consumption of quality local products from environmentally friendly production.

### THE WEEKLY PROGRAM

The Weekly Program is designed to provide an engagement option for short tourists and transit visitors. This program allows them to have an authentic, local experience while actively contributing to the operation of the Bakery during their short stay. The participation fee for this program is €200 per week. Weekly subscribers are also required to contribute at least 5 hours within the week at one of the services of the Bakery. In this case, in addition to hospitality at the Bakery's accommodation, participants in the Weekly Program have the opportunity to discover some workshops related to the processing of local raw materials, giving them a deeper immersion in the culture and traditions of the area.

In this way, the Weekly Program not only enriches the experience of short tourists, but also contributes to the dynamism and culture of the Bakery, allowing visitors to become an integral part of the local community for the duration of their stay.



### GOALS AND AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Through its various membership programs, the association promotes the active involvement of members, who can contribute according to their own availability and interests. Thus creating a network of active citizens who contribute to the growth and sustainability of the facility. It also supports the local economy by promoting the purchase of local products and contributing to the enhancement of local resources.

Finally, the collaborative model and the focus on the economy of scope promote sustainability both from an economic and environmental point of view.

Overall, the "Mani in Pasta" Association aims to be a dynamic and collaborative point of reference focused on community participation and the enhancement of the uniqueness of the Upper Valley area.



### ASSOCIATION

Awereness

Discovery

Registration

User actions

The client needs a trusted treatment to spend less or be included within the local community

Learns about the Association "Mani in pasta"

Decides to subscribe according to the format that suits them

Touch-points



INTERACTION LINE

Front stage Actions

Bakery Manager  
Cultural Facilitator  
Contributor

directs the client to the C.F.

assists with subscription selection

receives the client's fee and form

VISIBILITY LINE

Back stage Actions

Bakery Manager  
Cultural Facilitator  
Contributor

advertise the association

advertise the association

manages share earnings

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

Support Processes

Administrations  
Local Producer

funds advertising

promote the association



### LOYALTY

Participate

Take advantage of incentives

Achievement

Find a way to contribute to the collaboration hours required for the membership

Gets the expected reward according to the chosen subscription

Achieves the goal for which they decided to become members of the Association



INTERACTION LINE

collaborates with association members

offers discounts on local goods

helps on activity/service selection

helps on activity/service selection

S.P. offers annual member a discount

VISIBILITY LINE

calendar organization together with C.F.

maintain quality and manage store

organization of the service schedule

keeps management active and balanced

members can become the S.P.

INTERNAL INTERACTION LINE

provides visit to workshops for weekly subscription

funds to cover the discounts

agreement with B.M. on product prices



# Implementation of the core values

In chapter four, we saw how the entire project has been built on the basis of three core values, highlighting how radical sustainability is the result of the interconnection of these pillars. These principles not only define the essence of the project but also guide its every aspect and decision. Through a detailed exploration, the following illustrates how each of these values is integrated into the final system of La Biga – The Upper Valley Bakery, highlighting the specific practices and strategies adopted to ensure that sustainability permeates every level of the project. The in-depth analysis of these three pillars provides a clear vision of how they collectively contribute to an operating model that not only aims for efficiency and effectiveness but actively engages in the well-being of the environment, society and the economy, emphasizing a commitment to a more sustainable future.

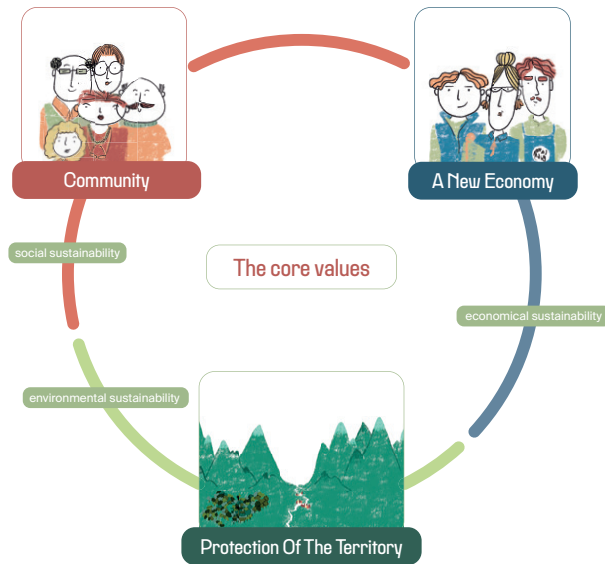


Fig. 123 Graph illustrating the values of the project  
Design by the author

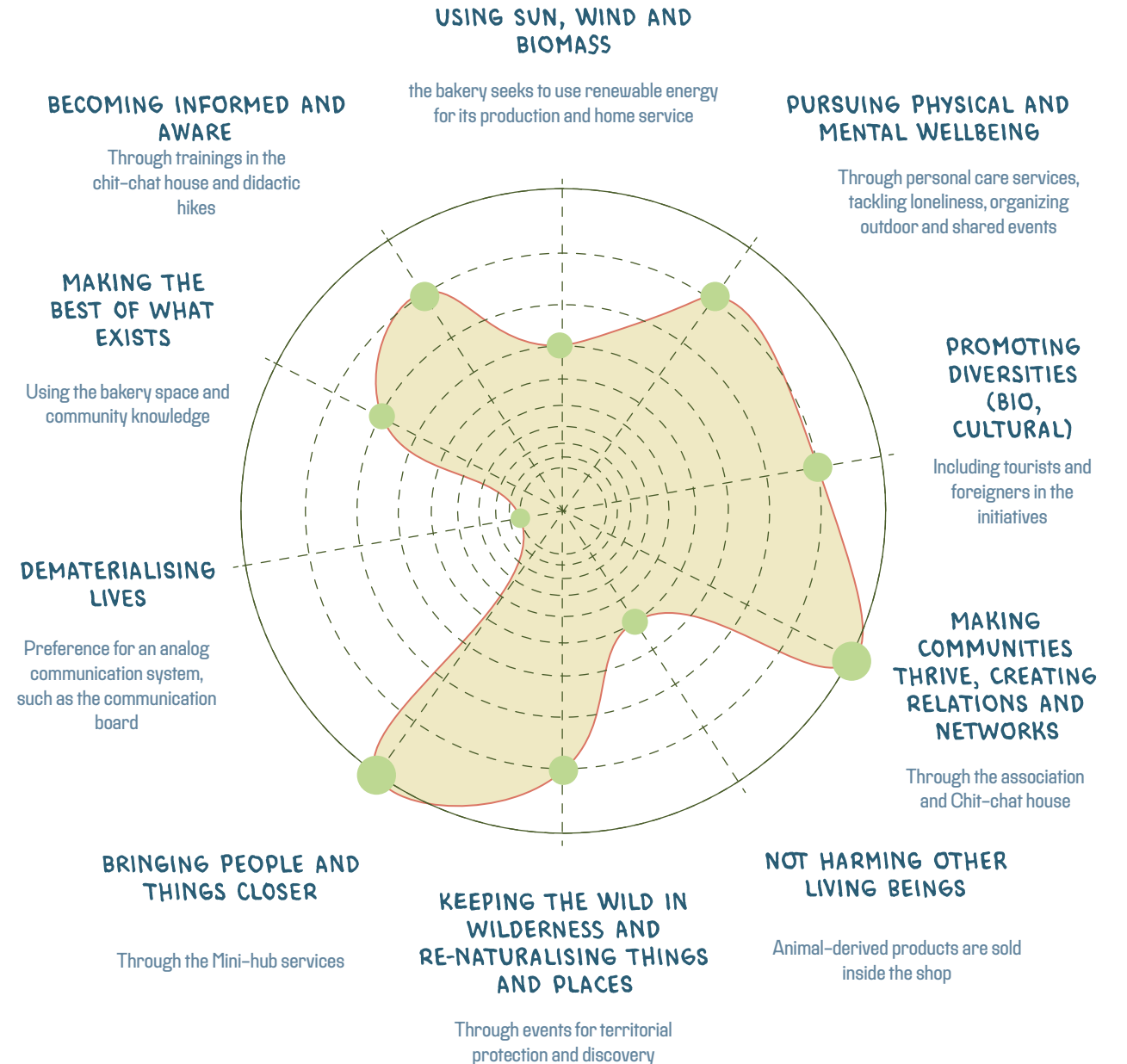


Fig. 124 Sustainability Scanner of the final system. Source: PSSD Final Synthesis  
Design Studio 1 | 2022/23. Design by the author




# Community SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The social sustainability of the Bakery relies on a wide and diverse community embracing all stakeholders in the Valley area. This community includes not only the future customers of the bakery, such as residents, vacationers and tourists, but also the project's key partners, who play a crucial role in its promotion and operation. In addition, there are close collaborators such as local producers, mini-hub service providers, the facilitator, and the bakery manager. Each of the roles contributes significantly to its operation and enrichment of the social fabric. These different players are interconnected and work together to sustain the vitality of the Bakery and promote a vibrant and inclusive community environment.

Furthermore, the social sustainability, is promoted through the very offerings proposed by the Bakery. The mini-hub, through its proximity services, offers real help to families and elderly people, as well as encouraging collaboration and fostering openness of the local community to new members. Finally, the Chit-chat House supports intergenerational aggregation and encourages, among other things, technological innovation through the organisation of training courses.

The following pages detail possible future users of The Biga, and their interactions within the service.

Fig. 125 Users Personas and User Journey 1. Design by the author.



**THE ELDERLY**  
RESIDENT

**GIOVANNI**

GIOVANNI IS AN 84-YEAR-OLD GENTLEMAN WHO HAS BEEN LIVING ALONE IN PONTEBERNARDO, A HAMLET OF PIETRAPORZIO, FOR MANY YEARS NOW.

**NEEDS**

He is completely self-sufficient, but sometimes he would need help in accomplishing some routine duties. Especially digital ones. Also, beginning to have difficulty driving he would need an essential goods store near him

**PAIN POINTS**


Because he spends a lot of time alone, he can sometimes be a bit grumpy and cocky

**PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS**

- Active
- Energetic
- Self-sufficient
- Lonely
- Grumpy
- Talkative
- Loves fishing and going for mushrooms

**GOALS&EXPECTATION**

He would need one-on-one support: personalized help to be able to access services and training to do activities on his own.






La Biga

THURSDAY MORNING	1H AFTER	14H30	15H00	15H30
DISCOVERY		SERVICE		
Get to know	Booking	Before	While	After



User Action	Giovanni needs to pay some bills, but he doesn't know how to use the home-banking from his phone. So he decides to go to the <b>Bakery mini-hub</b> . Today is the in-person day for Alice, the <b>cultural facilitator</b> of the Bakery	Right now Alice is busy with other people, but Giovanni can mark himself on the <b>reservation sheet</b> on the <b>comms board</b> and come back later. The first available seat is at 15h00	Giovanni heads back to the <b>Bakery</b> and waiting for his consulting turn drinks a coffee at the <b>Essential Shop</b> , taking the opportunity to have a chat with other locals present at the café.	Alice invites Giovanni into the room made available for the <b>Mini-Hub</b> . She also propose him to attend the <b>tech course</b> organized by Giulia on Tuesday evenings in the <b>Chit-chat House</b> .	Alice helps Giovanni register for the tech class on the <b>comms board</b> . On the <b>reservation sheet</b> they write the name, number of participants and phone number
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THE BAKERY	COMMS BOARD	THE BAKERY	MINI-HUB	COMMS BOARD
MINI-HUB	RESERVATION SHEET	ESSENTIAL SHOP		

 <b>THE BAKERY MANAGER</b>	 <b>THE LOCALS</b>	 <b>THE FACILITATOR</b>
--	--	---

TUESDAY EVENING	FEW MONTHS LATER
LOYALTY	
Participate	Achievement

The following week Giovanni participates in the <b>tech course</b> along with Giulia and other Upper Valley residents, where he learns the basic commands needed to use a computer. The course is held at the <b>Chit-chat house</b> .	A few months later Giovanni has become very skilled with technology and can even read the news on his phone!
--	--

CHIT-CHAT HOUSE	
TECH COURSE	
 <b>THE GUEST SPEAKER</b>	 <b>THE LOCALS</b>

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# THE FAMILY RESIDENT

GIULIA AND FRANCESCO

GIULIA AND FRANCESCO ARE A YOUNG COUPLE, IN THEIR 40S, RESIDENTS OF SAMBUCCO, AND THEY HAVE TWO DAUGHTERS ALESSIA (AGE 7) AND MARTA (AGE 10). BOTH WERE BORN AND RAISED HERE AND ARE VERY CONNECTED TO THE AREA, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES THEY THINK THAT LIVING IN THE CITY WOULD BE EASIER THEY WANT TO STAY.

### NEEDS

The couple loves living in the Upper Valley, but since the grandparents are elderly and can no longer care for the girls full time their routine has become very complicated working late into the afternoon in the lower valley. So they would need a babysitter.

### PAIN POINTS

Because of their work they are always very busy, have little free time and come home late.

### PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS

- Young
- Sporty
- Full of energy
- Friendly and Sociable
- Patients
- They love to spend quality time with their daughters
- In the freetime they are usually outside enjoying nature

### GOALS&EXPECTATION

Given their love for the area, they would love to be able to help elderly people with their resources and skills, and contribute to the vitality of their village!



WEDNESDAY    FRIDAY    A WEEK LATER    MONDAY AFTERNOON    FEW HOURS LATER

DISCOVERY    SERVICE

Get to know    Booking    Before    While    After

User Action

On the **comms board** at the **Bakery** they find the advertisement of the after-school service offered by the Mini-hub.

On the **reservation sheet** they mark the attendance of the girls for the Monday after: the service runs from 14h30 to 16h00.

Alessia and Marta arrive at 14h30 by **bus** along with the other children from the Upper Valley.

And after a nice **snack**, prepared by Mauro, the baker: all together get to the **Chit-Chat House**, where the older children sit at the big table to do their **homework**, while the younger ones play with the **board games**.

Here 6 o'clock rings, little by little parents begin to arrive to pick up the children. Some take the chance of the **Essential Shop** to do some shopping, others to have a chat with other parents. And of course, they **pay** Maria!

They call the number for information: Alice, the **cultural facilitator**, answers. Who explains to them how the service works.

On the sheet they write the name, number of participants and phone number

At the stop, Maria, the **babysitter**, is already waiting for them to take them to the bakery

Touch-points



Actors



Emotions



FEW WEEKS LATER    TUESDAY    AFTER A WEEK    FEW DAYS LATER    A WEEK AFTER    3 MONTHS LATER

ASSOCIATION    LOYALTY

Awareness    Discovery    Registration    Participate    Take advantage of incentives    Achievement

Giulia and Francesco are enthusiastic about the services offered by the **Mini-hub**, which they use many times a week! However, after a couple of weeks, they feel it has become a bit expensive.

But then Julia remembers reading in the **Upper Valley Magazine** about the association **"Mani in Pasta"**

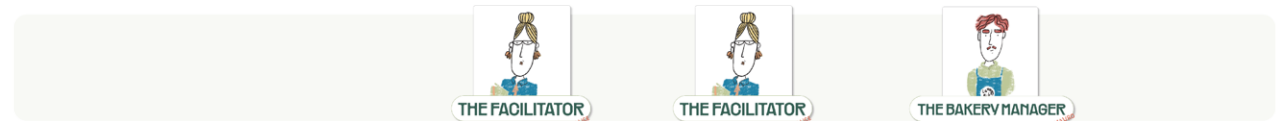
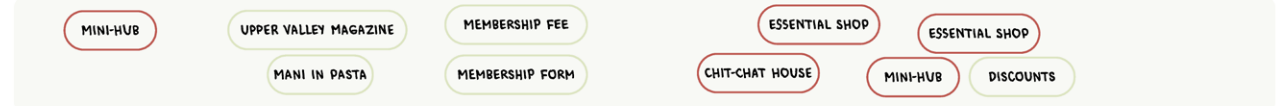
Alice, the Bakery's **Cultural Facilitator**, explains them how the association works and guides them in choosing the **membership** that suits them best. Finally, they sign the **membership form** and pay the **membership fee**.

Together with **Alice**, each week, they find the activity that is most helpful for the Bakery, in the **Mini-hub**, the **Chit-chat house**, or the **Essential shop**. Next, they mark themselves on the **attendance calendar** on the **comms board**. So that everyone is aware of the activity proposed.

After the first week, Giulia and Francesco get their first **discounts** on the **Essential Shop** and the **Mini-hub**!

They have been helping the bakery owners with the organization of the Bakery!

The **annual subscription** is perfect for them: it helps them **save a lot of money**, plus they are big fans of the **local products** presented by the Bakery. With a lower price they can afford to eat more sustainably and consciously







# THE FOREIGNER

RESIDENT

## DENISE

DENISE IS A FRENCH LADY IN HER 50S WHO HAS JUST MOVED TO THE UPPER VALLEY. FED UP WITH CITY LIFE, SHE DECIDED TO START A NEW LIFE EXPERIENCE AND MOVED TO THE ITALIAN ALPS. LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN SHE THOUGHT; IN FACT, VERY OFTEN SHE FEELS LONELY AND WOULD LIKE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE.

## NEEDS

Denise misses the social and vibrant life typical of the city, attending cultural events and meeting new people. Although she is learning to appreciate the little things about living in the mountains, she would need a meeting place where she can meet new people and practice the language

## PAIN POINTS

She doesn't know anyone here and doesn't speak Italian very well, which makes life in a small village a bit tricky.

## PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS

- Charismatic
- Highly cultured
- Elegant
- Open to change
- Loves to share moments in company
- She never forgets the 5 o'clock tea

## GOALS&EXPECTATION

Her goal is to be able to be part of the local community and to be able to bring a fresh look to the local people, given her experiences and being a foreigner.



User Action

Denise, read in the **Upper Valley magazine**, which she got at the **Porta di Valle office**, about a book swap night at **La Biga - Upper Valley Bakery**.

Intrigued by the event and wanting to meet new people, she decided to **call and reserve a place** for the event

Arriving at the event she is greeted by **Martina**, the girl organizing the event. And she takes a seat at one of the small tables in the dedicated room of the **Chit-chat house**.

Each of the participants **presents the chosen book** and makes it available for lending to the other participants. Selected books are exchanged among participants.

Together with other participants, they decide to stay longer at the **Essential Shop** café to have a drink all together. They chat and comment on the books that were discussed.

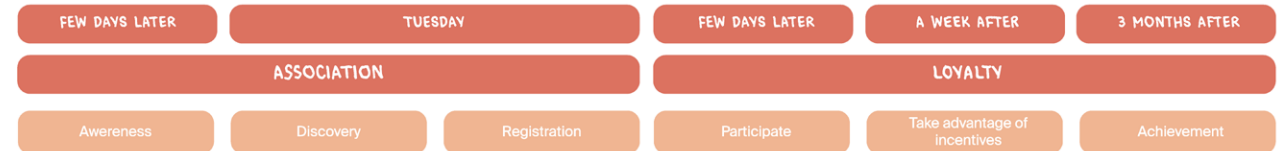
Touch-points



Actors



Emotions



Denise is very happy to have participated in the event, however she still feels left out from the local community... she would like to do something for them.

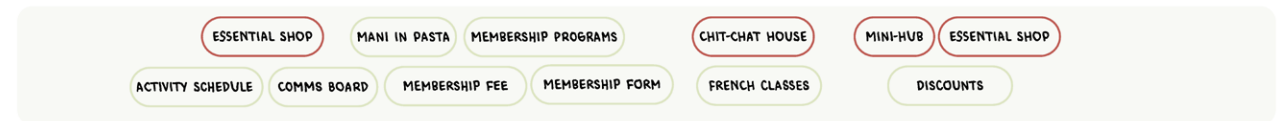
One day while shopping at the **Essential Shop** she finds on the **comms board** the **Chit-chat house schedule** for the coming week. Here she finds, in addition to the program, information about the association the "**Mani in Pasta**".

Alice, **the facilitator**, explains to Denise how the association works and the different **membership programs**. Denise decides to join: she signs the **membership form** and pays her **annual subscription fee**.

As a member, Denise decides to organize **French classes**. Together with Alice they decide on the days and hours: the French course will be held every Wednesday evening from 18h30 to 19h30 in the dedicated **Chit-chat House** room of the Bakery

now Denise can enjoy all the services of the **Mini-hub** at the Biga at a **reduced price** and even do a conscious-local shopping at the **Essential Shop!**

but most importantly, she feels much closer to the local community, and thanks to her time spent in the Bakery, she has met many new people with whom to share moments in the company





### THE ELDERLY HOLIDAYMAKER

PAOLO

PAOLO IS A 60-YEAR-OLD TUSCAN MAN WHO HAS BEEN COMING IN VACATION TO THE UPPER STURA VALLEY FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW. HE ALWAYS RENTS THE SAME HOUSE IN THE HAMLET OF CASTELLO, NEAR PIETRAPORZIO. UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO HIS SONS WERE ALSO COMING, BUT SINCE THEY HAVE GROWN UP THEY PREFER TO GO TO THE SEASIDE WITH FRIENDS.

### NEEDS

Paul is very happy with his time spent in the Upper Stura Valley, however since his children are older and no longer come on vacation with him he spends a lot of time alone. He would need a place where he could share moments in company.

### PAIN POINTS

Sometimes he can forget about things, and get lost in the clouds, better to provide him with a calendar.

### PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS

- A chatty guy
- Funny
- Available
- Optimistic
- Quiet
- Good chef
- Never misses his morning walk

### GOALS&EXPECTATION

His goal is to feel an integral part of the local community by helping whenever and wherever he can, while at the same time filling his time among other people so that he won't feel too lonely



FEW DAYS LATER

A WEEK AFTER

AT THE END OF THE SEASON

### ASSOCIATION

### LOYALTY

Awareness

Discovery

Registration

Participate

Take advantage of incentives

Achievement

User Action

One day Paolo stops at **La Biga-The Upper Valley Bakery** for a coffee. In the bakery he meets **Francesco**, his neighbour, who is helping **the Bakery Manager**, with the groceries just arrived from the courier.

Francesco tells Paolo about the **"Mani in Pasta" Association**, which was established specifically so that the members of the local community could help each other and share moments together!

Paolo returns at the **Bakery** and with Alice, **the facilitator**, fills out the **participation form** and pays the **season membership fee**.

Paolo propose to help with the **home delivery** of the groceries to the people who requested the service.

He correctly noted his presence on the **attendance calendar**, as **Alice** showed him, and every day at 10h00 after his morning walk he goes to the bakery to collect the orders to be delivered.

Thanks to his active participation now Paolo can benefit from some **discounts** available on local products sold by the **Essential Store**.

Time has come to head back to Livorno, but Paolo is so glad to have been able to help the Upper Valley community this summer. Now he feels even closer to the area and its community. But most importantly, he felt less lonely!

Touch-points

ESSENTIAL SHOP

WOM

MEMBERSHIP FEE

MANI IN PASTA

MEMBERSHIP FORM

ESSENTIAL SHOP

ESSENTIAL SHOP

ATTENDANCE CALENDAR

HOME-DELIVERY SERVICE

DISCOUNTS

Actors



Emotions

Fig. 126 Users Personas and User Journey 4. Design by the author.



### THE YOUNG COUPLE

#### ANNA AND MARCO

HOLIDAYMAKER

ANNA AND MARCO ARE A YOUNG VACATIONING COUPLE. SHE IS 24 YEARS OLD AND HE IS 29. HER GRANDPARENTS ARE ORIGINALLY FROM HERE AND SHE HAS BEEN COMING HERE ON VACATION DURING THE SUMMER SINCE SHE WAS LITTLE, SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FABIO HAS ALSO BECOME FOND OF THE AREA AND BY NOW THEY ALWAYS COME TO SPEND THEIR AUGUST VACATION IN THE FRESH AIR.

#### NEEDS

The couple likes to relax and spend quiet time, often in the company of a good chopping board of local products. The couple likes to move around the valley in search of the best polenta. They need a cozy place full of quality products where they can feed their cravings while on vacation.

#### PAIN POINTS

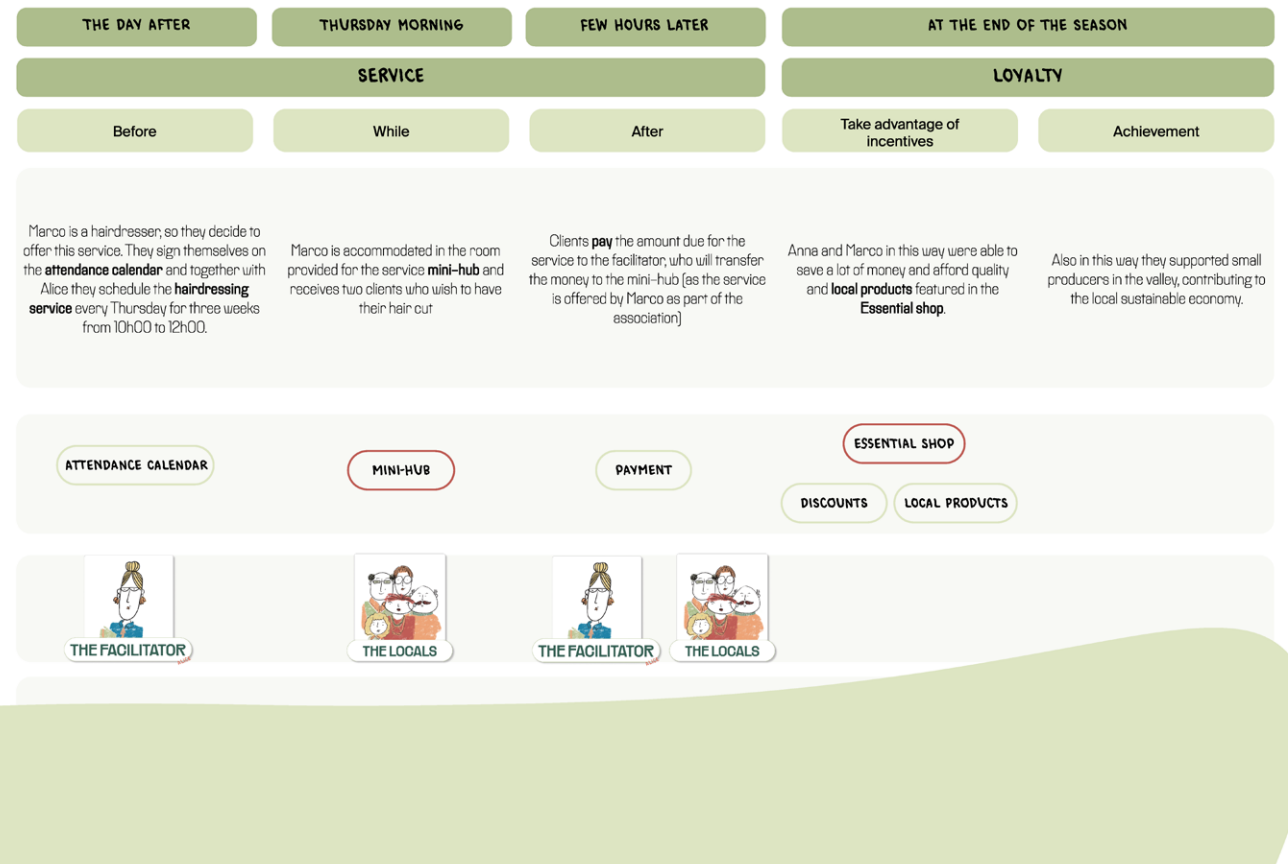
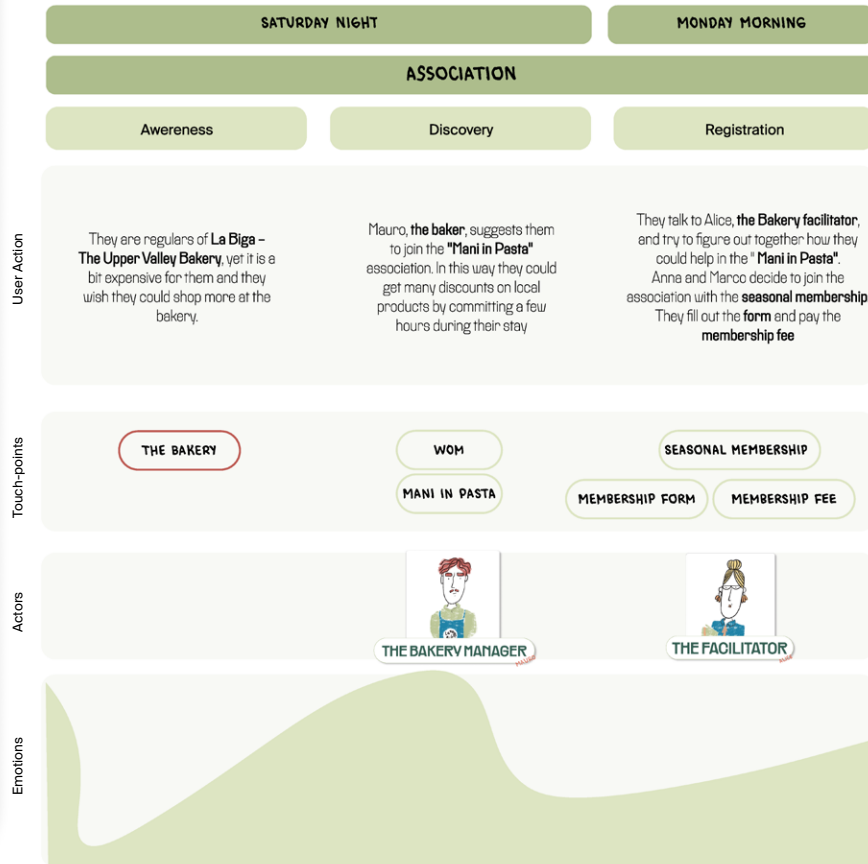
They can finish the pantry in a very short time....

#### PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS

- Gourmands
- Looking out for sustainable economies
- Entrepreneurs
- Enthusiastic
- Singers
- Collaborative
- Anna is attentive and Marco is distracted

#### GOALS&EXPECTATION

Aisha and Marco like to contribute to the local economy, support small local producers and have a sustainable lifestyle in connection with the Upper Valley area values





### THE YOUNG COUPLE

SHORT-TERM  
TURIST

#### FRANKA AND LAURE

FRANKA ET LAURE ARE TWO GERMAN GIRLS, BOTH IN THEIR EARLY 30S, HIKING IN THE ALPS FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. HOWEVER, FRANKA HAS FALLEN OFF DURING THE TRAIL AND THEY DECIDED TO REST FOR A FEW DAYS, STOPPING IN THE STURA VALLEY.

#### NEEDS

Franka and Laure need a place to rest that is not too expensive. In fact, since they did not plan for this long stop, they did not plan for this expense.

#### PAIN POINTS

Franka, given her sprain, cannot do work that is too physical or heavy. In addition, both do not speak Italian.

#### PERSONALITY & CHARACTERISTICS

- Determinate
- Curious
- Pro-active
- Easily adapt to new situations
- Great lovers of Italian culture
- Excellent hikers

#### GOALS&EXPECTATION

They both want to take advantage of this week off to discover the culture and territory of the Upper Stura Valley, an area they were previously unfamiliar with.



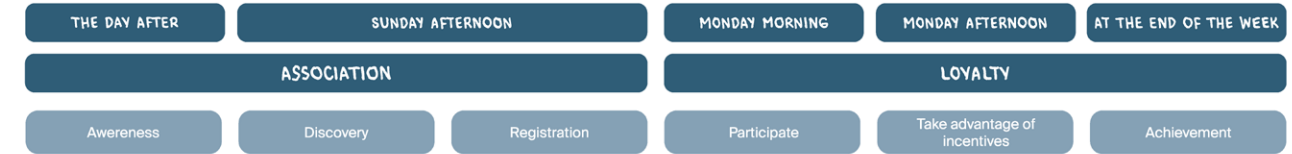
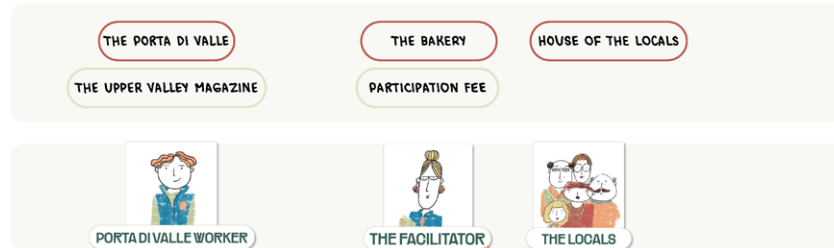
Since they don't know much about the area, they go to the **Porta di Valle**, the valley's tourism office, to ask for information. Here they get the **Upper Valley magazine**.

At **La Biga - The Upper valley Bakery** they are holding **traditional cooking workshops**, and tonight is **movie night!** Franka and Laure **sign up** for the cooking workshop through the **Porta di Valle**.

Once they arrive at **La Biga**, the girls are greeted by **Giorgia and Claudio**, two Upper Valley residents and the organizers of the cooking class. They pay the **participation fee** to **Alice**, the **facilitator**.

Together with the other participants, they go to the **couple's home**, where the **cooking class** will be held. They learn how to make **Crouset**, a fresh pasta typical of this area.

Afterwards, all together, they taste the delicious fresh pasta in **Giorgia and Claudio's garden!**



Franka and Laure, excited about this activity, go back to the **Bakery**; they want to talk with **Alice**, the **Bakery's cultural facilitator**.

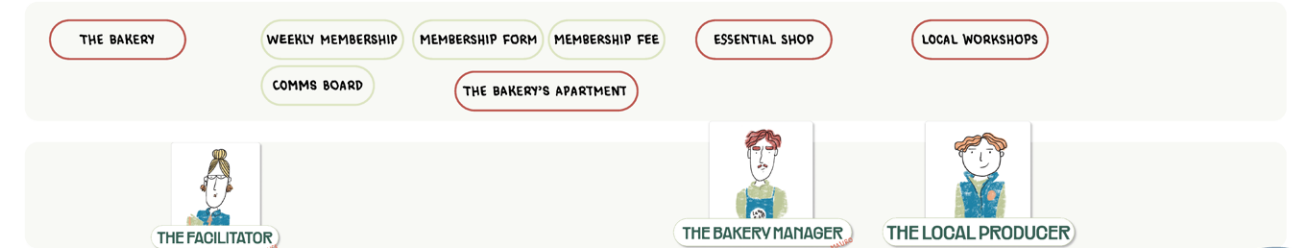
**Alice** shows the girls the **comms board** and explains the functioning of the association. And she proposes to them to become "residents" of the upper valley for a week by participating in the **"Mani in Pasta"** association's **weekly program**.

For **Franka et Laure** changes a bit on a budget level, but decide anyway to subscribe to the weekly subscription. They pay the **subscription fee** and head to the **Bakery's apartment**.

In the morning **Franka and Laure** help **Mauro**, the **Bakery Manager**, with the **Essential Shop**, doing table service and kitchen chores.

In the afternoon they visit the several **workshops** in the area, including the **Sambucan sheep farm**, the **beekeeping**, the **soap factory**,...

**Jeanne and Laure** are ready to resume their trek, but with hearts full of joy! They would have never expected to have such an adventure, and they even learned how to make goat cheese with **Marta!**





# Protection of the Territory

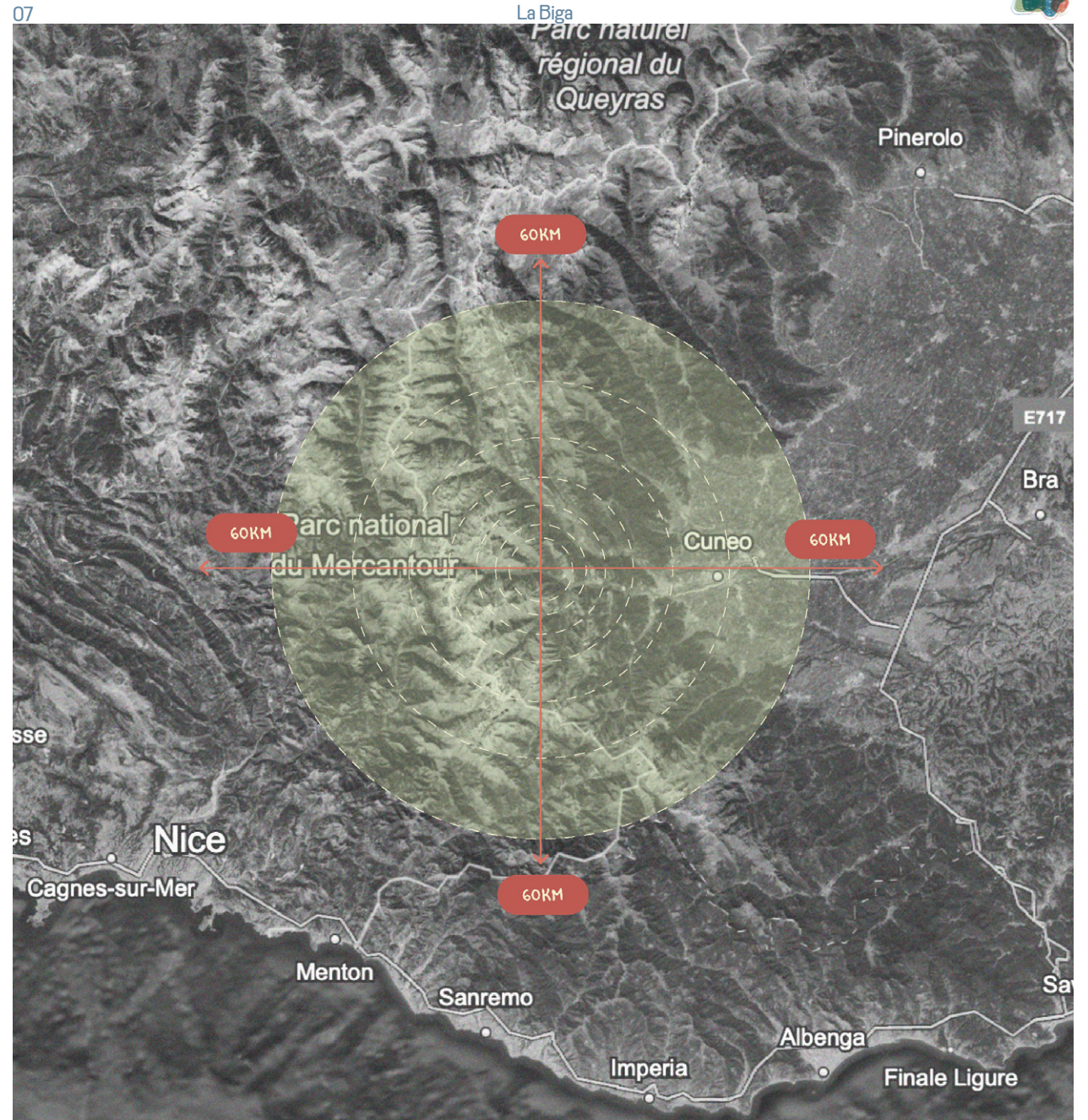
## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability is a cornerstone of the Bakery project, integrating perfectly into its vision and operations, despite not being its more visible element of operation. This commitment to the environment is manifested primarily through conscious and responsible choices regarding raw materials, which are selected not only for their quality but also for the proximity of their origin, limiting the distance of sourcing within a 60-kilometer radius. This approach promotes local biodiversity and supports local economies, reflecting the Bakery's commitment to short supply chains and support for local producers.

The Bakery's concern for the environment extends beyond the selection of ingredients. It actively engages in initiatives to reduce food waste, such as selling unsold products at reduced prices, highlighting its active role in the fight against waste and in promoting rather more conscious and sustainable consumption.

In addition, through the activities offered by Chit-chat House, the Bakery becomes a catalyst for the discovery and protection of local biodiversity, incentivizing the community to explore and preserve its natural environment. These actions not only enrich participants' ecological awareness but also strengthen the community's bond with its local area, rather promoting a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way of life.

Fig. 131 Map of the 60km radius.  
Retrieved from Google earth. Design by the author





# A New Economy

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The economic sustainability of the Bakery is based on several pillars that contribute to its successful financial operation in the long term. One of the main cornerstones is the diversification of services offered, which allows the Bakery to generate income through multiple sources, such as selling daily needs in the essential store, renting a space for the mini-hub, and organising events and cultural activities in the Chit-chat House. Furthermore, collaboration with specific key partners including local government support contributes to cover some operative expenses and support the discounts and initiatives designed for the association's members. This collaborative model allows the Bakery to optimise available resources and offer affordable services for the local community.

Eventually, the payment of membership fees to the "Mani in Pasta" Association contribute not only to financially support the Bakery, but also to ensure the continuity of the offerings offered and the time availability of the members, who are a crucial resource for the entire facility's running.

Fig. 132 System Map. Design by the author.

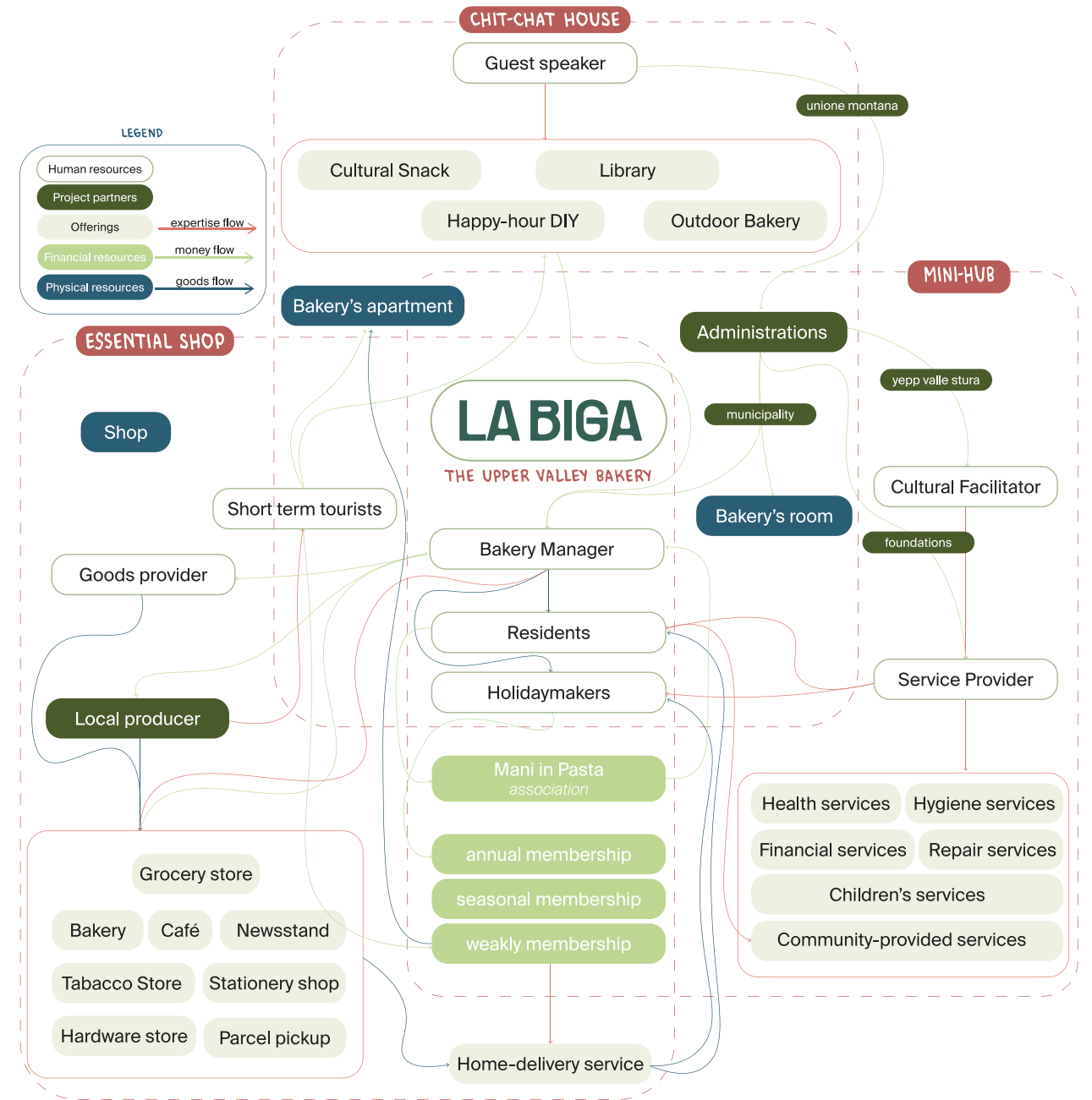




Fig. 133 Stakeholder Map. Design by the author.



Here are some of the specific partners and their collaboration arrangements:

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Local municipalities support the Bakery by covering the rent of space inside the store for the mini-hub. Additionally, they fund investment to support designated discounts for members of the “Mani in Pasta” association.

**YEPP VALLE STURA ASSOCIATION**

the association hires and funds the cultural mediator critical to the operation of the mini-hub. This consultant is responsible for facilitating cultural activities and events within the space.

**FOUNDATIONS AND EXTERNAL FUNDING**

the Bakery receives funding from foundations and other external sources to cover additional costs necessary to provide services and accessibility to upper valley users at affordable prices.

**UNIONE MONTANA**

Funds some of the activities offered by the Chit-chat Bakery, contributing to its operation and cultural offerings.



### KEY PARTNERS

#### ADMINISTRATIONS

Local municipalities

Unione Montana

Porta di Valle

Vepp Valle Stura

Foundations

#### LOCAL PRODUCERS

Bars Chabrier

Apicoltura Fossati

Cooperativa il Germinale

Consorzio L'escarioun

La maison de l'Ubaye

La Fragolina

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### ESSENTIAL SHOP

#### SERVICE MINI-HUB

#### CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

### VALUE PROPOSITION

La Biga stands as a bakery providing essential and close-knit services in mountain areas lacking of those services. In addition to being a cultural and social hub, it is also a space where residents and tourists can actively engage to become an inclusive community. By encouraging the customers' participation in the care and organization of the Bakery, a sense of community and shared responsibility is fostered.

### KEY RESOURCES

#### HUMAN RESOURCES

Local Community  
Bakery Manager  
Cultural Facilitator  
Services providers  
Guest speakers

#### PHYSICAL RESOURCES

The shop  
Bakery supplies  
Guest apartment  
Room for mini-hub

#### FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Association fees  
Collaborations  
Local Producer Agreements  
Funds

### COST STRUCTURE

#### ESSENTIAL SHOP

Raw Materials

Production Costs

Electricity bills

Guest apt. maintenance

Local producers goods

#### CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

Activities

Events

Guest speaker

Upper Valley Magazine

#### SERVICE MINI-HUB

Mini-hub room

Association discounts

Cultural facilitator

Service promoters



### CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP

#### CASUAL CUSTOMERS

#### RESIDENTS

#### HOLIDAYMAKERS

#### SHORT-TERM TOURISTS

### CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

Occasional users of the bakery, who are not involved in its organization or care

Residents of the upper valley who regularly frequent the bakery, using its services in their totality

Holidaymakers who reach second homes in summer or during the main holidays

Short or transitory tourists who want to discover the territory and need an accommodation

### CHANNELS

Shop  
WOM  
Advertisement  
Upper Valley Magazine  
Workshop & Activities  
Porta di Valle Consortium  
Association  
Comms board

### REVENUE STREAM

#### ESSENTIAL SHOP

Grocery sale

Café

Goods sale

#### CHIT-CHAT HOUSE

Administrations investment

Café

Participation fee

Sponsors

#### SERVICE MINI-HUB

Administrations investment

Payment from customers

Membership fee

Sponsors





# 08.

# PROTOTYPING



# Introduction

The following chapter presents the prototype phase in the service development and its importance for a successful project. The Service Prototype represents a critical phase, located at the end of the development phase according to the Double Diamond design model. The goal is to define an initial solution for the service before moving on to the implementation phase. According to the Social Innovation Pathway theory, this phase is crucial to test and improve the solution before implementation, reducing the risks of losing competitiveness. Based on the organisational framework, to manage the prototyping phase, developed by the Polimi Desis Lab, the author concluded the research by analysing a step within the Bakery system through a practical test to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed solution.

The testing phase was conducted through a validation interview with representatives of Vepp Association, a potential stakeholder within the Bakery system. The interview focused on assessing the need and importance of the cultural mediator in the project. It took place on February 22, 2024 at the "l'ultimo pian" hall in Demonte, following a preliminary meeting on February 8, 2024. Despite the enthusiasm shown by the participants toward the project, the current conditions are not favourable for the immediate introduction of the mediator. Therefore, it was discussed to start with some specific activities and to involve cooperatives such as Proposta80 and Emmanuele to financially support the role of the ombudsman. The importance of additional government funding or participation in external calls to ensure the full functioning and effectiveness of this professional role was highlighted.

*Fig. 136 Illustration of the Outdoor Bakery and the Itinerant Activity, Illustrations by the author.*



# Service Prototype

At this point in the project, according to the Double Diamond design model discussed earlier (see Chapter 3), the project stands at the end of the development phase. The goal of this phase is to define an initial solution for the service, before turning it into a real experience and then moving on to the so-called Delivering phase, the stage in which services are launched on the market.

According to the Social Innovation Journey theory, the roadmap of a service is characterized by two main macro-steps, the first are activities aimed at defining the project's values, its impact, its users and stakeholders, and finally its mode of operation. The feasibility step, the last of this phase, deals with the technical and operational organization of the solution and is tested through co-design or prototyping. Based on this pre-prototyping, the project may or may not move to the second design stage, which could be called an incubator of the social and environmental impact of the project.

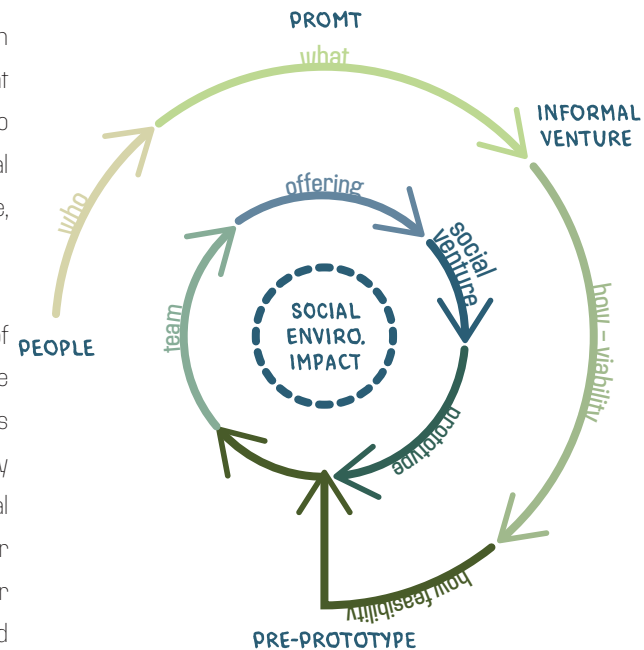


Fig.136 Social Innovation Journey roadmap. Source: PSSD Final Synthesis Design Studio 1 | 2022/23. Design by the author

Therefore, this testing phase, is crucial to improve the solution before implementing it, as well as to limit risks of losing competitiveness later on. In addition, prototyping at this stage, allows to gain knowledge about the interaction of the service given a precise time and space, begin to estimate costs and benefits, along with possible future customers or stakeholders.

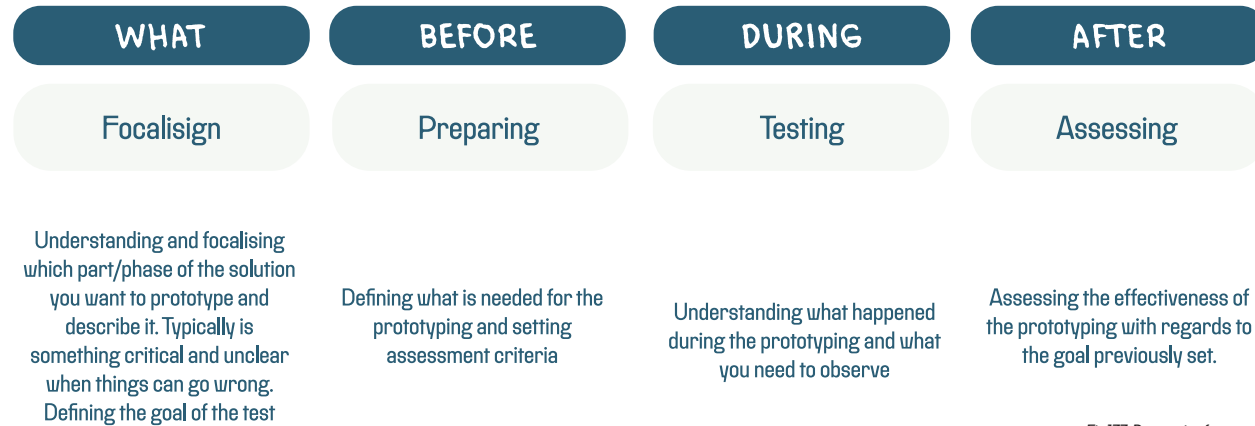
Service prototyping can have two types of objectives: exploratory or evaluative. In the former case, it is to draw inspirations or solutions for a particular service, while in the latter, some proposals of the service are evaluated before leading to a final solution. Usually, the service is tested by simulating one or rather more interactions in the system, and through one or more touch points. These activities can be carried out in groups of people, involving users and different actors involved in the service.

The service prototype having as its objective to test and validate the design choices, and to best replicate the final experience of interaction with the service, must be orchestrated as a large "mise en scène" with a specific plot to follow.

Consequently, being an extremely complex and challenging simulation, it needs timely organisation. For this reason, there are several creative tools developed specifically for this design phase.

Some of these may be:

- **Role Playing:** perform a hypothetical service experience;
- **Rough Prototyping:** quickly mock-up ideas using simple assets and materials, already available on the spot
- **Concept Walkthrough:** show a service idea to its potential users or providers through a step-by-step imaginary tour
- **Evaluation Matrix:** prioritise ideas based on the most relevant success criteria for the project
- **Service Image:** capture the essence of a service experience in a single frame
- **Validation Interview**



*Fig.137 Prototyping framework  
 Source: DESIS Innovation Lab  
 Retrieved: PSSD Final Synthesis Design Studio 1 | 2022/23.  
 Design by the author*

Furthermore, given the importance of having an efficient action plan for the prototyping phase, the Polimi Desis Lab has developed a specific organisational framework to manage this process. This approach has three specific time moments, before, during, and after prototyping, as well as a preliminary goal-setting phase, each of which involves a particular action.

Finally, based on the evidence presented above on the importance of prototyping in service design, the author decided to conclude the research by analysing the Bakery system through a practical test. Below, we examine how the prototyping session of the project under consideration was structured, following the established agenda.



# Planning the Prototyping Phase

## FOCALISING

The test was conducted through a validation interview with the Vepp Association, a potential stakeholder interested in the service. This testing phase was designed not only as a proof of the feasibility and functionality of the innovation, but rather as an opportunity to engage a broader community of stakeholders, as suggested by the PSSD synthesis lab held in 2019. Vepp is recognized as a key partner in the system, offering opportunities for close collaboration with the Bakery, for example, in integrating new offerings such as the cultural mediator. As Vepp is a new participant in the project, having not participated in previous co-design sessions, its inclusion brings a fresh perspective and further enhances the work.

The cultural facilitator emerges as a central player in the proposed system, having the crucial task of facilitating interactions among the various actors and coordinating the agenda of the mini-hub of services. This role, in addition to being essential to the success of the project, plays a key role in the functioning of the entire system designed for the Bakery. Therefore, the validation session focused on assessing the need and importance, of the implementation and impact of this professional figure within the project. The specific aim of this assessment was to explore its administrative and economic sustainability and to determine in which areas of the system the cultural facilitator could play an active and crucial role.



## PREPARING

The project validation interview took place in the afternoon Feb. 22, 2024, for a total duration of one hour, at "l'ultimo pian" hall in Demonte, one of the multi-purpose centers of Vepp Association. The association, founded in 2018 by youth from the Stura Valley Mountain Union, promotes youth engagement and community development through participatory projects that address the needs and interests of local youth.

The event followed an initial meeting via Zoom, held on Feb. 8, 2024, coordinated by Alessia Bagnis, a professional educator at Emmanuele Social Cooperative, and some local policymakers, focused on services for the elderly in the Upper Stura Valley. During this meeting, concerns and challenges encountered by the cooperative in organizing cultural and recreational activities emerged, mainly due to the limited availability of resources, and the difficulty of forming participatory and cohesive groups. Therefore, it was decided to hold a subsequent meeting, this time in person and with a selected group of participants, to explore practical and concrete solutions, including the proposal to introduce a cultural facilitator to work in the more peripheral areas. Consequently, this second meeting proved to be an ideal opportunity to discuss and evaluate the integration and effectiveness of such a professional figure in the context of the bakery project, and more generally in the Upper Valley context.

In order to test the role of the mediator, it was essential to include representatives of the Vepp association, since they could represent the entity in charge of hiring the cultural mediator, a potential candidate for this role, and someone with direct experience of the peculiarities and challenges of the Upper Valley. Thus, the following were invited to take part in the validation interview:

- Alessia Bagnis, professional educator at the Emmanuele Social Cooperative and part of the administrative council of Vepp Valle Stura.
- Annamaria Mustica, educator and coordinator of the PNRR operational team.
- Giulia Jannelli, manager of the Locanda la Pecora Nera in Ponteb Bernardo and involved in the community life of the Valley.

Considering the limited time availability of the participants, the prototyping activity was condensed and effectively integrated into a larger discussion. Therefore, the researcher opted for a validation interview to be included in the flow of the meeting without requiring excessive time for explanation or implementation. As a result, some key aspects of the project were introduced, with a focus on the role of the cultural mediator, followed by a discussion and discussion together with the meeting participants on the feasibility of the project.



Fig. 138 Participants of the Validation Interview: (from left to right) Giulia Jannelli, Annamaria Mustica, Alessia Bagnis. Photo by the author

## TESTING

**Setting and Timing:** The meeting took place in the youth room "L'ultimo Pian" in Demonte, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., with the participation of four people, including the author of the project.

**Stages of the meeting:** The meeting began with a presentation of the project "The Biga – Upper Valley Bakery," giving particular attention to the role of the facilitator, followed by a discussion on its feasibility and the importance of incorporating such position permanently in the Upper Valley territory. The discussion concluded with an assessment of some immediate activities to be launched in the territory.

**Highlights of the meeting:** The meeting began with a clarification of Vepp's role within the Bakery system and rather more

generally of its role in the territory. The Youth Empowerment Partnership Program (VEPP) is a voluntary association established to provide cultural and aggregative opportunities in the Valley territory, characterized by youth participation and organization. Despite its efforts, the association is going through a critical period due to a shortage of volunteers and active youth participation. This situation underscores the important need to revitalize local associationism through new energy and initiatives that can attract more volunteer contributions, but also the association's inadequacy to take on a figure like the facilitator.

Moreover, the discussion clarifies a crucial point: the facilitator cannot be a volunteer rather it must be a remunerated professional. The importance and success of this figure lies in its ability to mediate and stimulate community participation, making it



essential to the success of the project, thus necessitating it to be a professional. This aspect raises questions about the financial and organizational sustainability of the project, as Vepp, relying on volunteerism, is unable to fill this role.

However, a number of social cooperatives, including Proposta80 and Emmanuele (for whom Alessia and Annamaria work), represent examples of entities currently working in the valley, with specific focus on senior citizen projects. In their experience, Alessia and Annamaria, emphasize the difficulty of extending services in the Upper Valley area due to lack of funding, reflecting a common challenge faced by many social actors in the area. This highlights the importance of strategic collaborations and financial support to expand community service provision.

Also mentioned during the meeting is The "Diamoci una Mano " Association. Established in 1989, this association has demonstrated significant commitment to the valley over the years, particularly in rather accessible areas; however, it has encountered difficulties in maintaining an active presence in the Upper Valley, especially in the post-pandemic period. Lack of volunteers and logistical challenges emerge as significant obstacles, reflecting a rather broader problem of mobilizing human and material resources in remote areas. Although the idea of introducing a facilitator figure has been universally appreciated for its potential to stimulate community cohesion

and activation, the current reality presents significant challenges. Funding shortages and the apparent disinterest of local governments raise questions about the feasibility of such a role in the short term. However, a willingness to work to overcome these obstacles emerges, with the goal of making the implementation of the facilitator achievable in the future.

In this regard, the presence of PNRR funds is mentioned, which is a first concrete step toward improving the daily lives of residents and could serve as a launching pad for rather broader initiatives. To date, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan ( PNRR), has allocated funds for the placement of two Health and Social Workers (OSS) for individual support and aggregation activities in the upper valley. This support underscores the importance of leveraging existing financial opportunities to achieve community goals. The funds allow the workers to have a 1-hour per week presence in the area until June 2025. According to the participants in the meeting, if this "experiment" works, there may be a possibility to apply for more funds for the implementation of the facilitator position.

Subsequently, the consideration of the facilitator's background opens an interesting debate on the balance between external professionalism and internal community knowledge. Both options have advantages, from the neutrality and expertise of an outsider to the familiarity and trust of a community member, highlighting

the need for a thoughtful choice that best fits the specifics of the Upper Valley context.

Finally, the meeting concluded with a proposal to organize immediate initiatives, benefiting from the presence of the Oss. Some of the proposed initiatives were the organization of a book exchange and the pursuit of cinema sessions. These activities not only address immediate needs, among others raised during the co-design sessions together with residents and tourists, but begin to weave the fabric for a rather more cohesive and active community, ready to welcome changes and new professionals.

#### ASSESSING

In the following, a final evaluation of the Validation Interview is elaborated: the author attempts to provide a clear and effective overview of the outcomes of the interview, highlighting the main areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and strategic changes needed to move the project forward.

#### Data Analysis

Throughout the meeting, the participants showed broad willingness and participation, expressing enthusiasm toward the proposed project. This meeting proved both critical and constructive, providing a valuable opportunity to understand in practical terms the potential for project implementation in the coming future.



#### Feedback and Prospects

Although the current conditions are not completely favorable for the introduction of a facilitator due to a basis that is not yet solid, it emerged as a priority to start with the implementation of some specific activities. Gradually introducing professional profiles in the community may ease the path toward establishing a full-time facilitator in the area.

#### Changes in the Proposed Solution

The meeting made it clear that Vepp is not the best entity to financially support the facilitator position. Instead, cooperatives, notably Proposition80 and Emmanuele, seem to be ideal candidates to take on this role. However, the importance of additional government funding or participation in external calls is highlighted to ensure the full functioning and effectiveness of this professional role.

#### Reflections and Possible Improvements

Reflecting on how the approach could have been handled differently, it emerges that it would have been fruitful to organise one of the activities discussed during the meeting as part of the project prototype. This step could have offered a concrete preview of the project's impact. Unfortunately, due to the availability of NRP funds only as of March 7, it was not possible to include this activity in the initial research and development phase.



*Fig.139 House of the grandparent's author in Pontebernardo. Photo by the author.*

# Conclusions

## ENG

Over the past few months, devoted to the research of this thesis, I had the opportunity to experience once again the territory of the Alta Valle Stura di Demonte which I consider home, exploring every aspect of it. My arrival in August, a period characterized by great ferment and vitality, marked the beginning of this research that continues until now, days in which I write these last pages, where winter has covered the streets with snow, making the villages quiet and peaceful. These days, the hustle and bustle of August seems to be only a distant memory, however, the land is preparing to awaken with the arrival of the warm season.

My connection to this place is rooted, transmitted to me by my grandfather, originally from here. I spent all my summers here as a child until my teenage years. Over time, I began to feel more and more connected to this area and its community, not only during

the summer but also during less crowded times, until I officially became a resident in 2020. However, because of my studies only in the last few months have I lived here so continuously.

This experience allowed me to experience the upper valley in its truest form and to understand its dynamics in depth, revealing both its potentials and its criticalities, bringing me closer to the daily realities of the inhabitants, their habits and needs.

The initial project of this thesis, focusing on countering depopulation and attracting young people to the mountains, changed with the awareness of the major challenges this area faces: the lack of essential services and the fragmentation of the social fabric. Indeed, one of the main observations that emerged during these months of research is the loss of a



sense of community. Once vital in these isolated places, it is now being missed, replaced by an increasingly connected but less cohesive world, where traditional community life is given up for an increasing individualism and virtual relationships.

However, this passivity is also due to the lack of a gathering place where people can meet and share moments of community. This aspect was one of the main themes highlighted during the co-design sessions held together with the local community, tourists and vacationers of the Valley. The absence of public spaces, in addition to further contributing to the feeling of isolation, reduces the possibility of active citizenship. It is precisely these meeting places that allow people to actively join together in initiatives for the common good, working and growing together. Participating in these shared activities creates a sense of belonging to a collective, committed toward the realization of a better and more equitable future, motivating individuals to commit themselves to this cause. As highlighted by Barbera (2023): public spaces play a crucial role in encouraging social interactions, such as the development of community bonds and mutual aid.

One observation raised during a co-design workshop particularly caught my attention: "If the population is low, does it really make sense to upgrade services?" This comment reflects the complexity of the challenge ahead, underscoring the importance

of an approach that is not limited to merely providing services, but aims to rebuild the social and cultural fabric of the area, making it again a place worth living in and attracting new population.

The need for new inhabitants in the area is another crucial aspect for the rebirth and regeneration of the areas in question. A community that is characterized by its diversity and the presence of a complex network of interdependencies not only enriches the social and economic fabric of the area, but also makes it more resilient in the face of challenges (Odell, 2021). In order to imagine and build a desired future in these places, it is crucial to adopt an open attitude toward outsiders and potential new scenarios that may arise. This implies the need to be ready to embrace change and new perspectives, promoting a more inclusive environment that values and integrates new human capital into the local context.

Starting from these reflections and based on the research I have carried out in recent months, it is clear that strengthening essential services and rebuilding a cohesive community are the pillars for the regeneration of this territory and its population. Consequently, this project aspires to establish the foundation for a broader and more comprehensive renewal, creating a fertile and welcoming environment that can facilitate the arrival and integration of new inhabitants in the future.



Out of these reflections, research and community meetings came La Biga – The Bakery of Alta Valle, a multipurpose center that offers a diverse but complementary range of services essential to village life. In addition to serving as a point of sale for basic necessities, it takes on a relevant role as a cultural and social hub, inviting residents and tourists to share moments and engage in active community building.

This design is not a final solution, but rather represents the start of a wider process of regeneration and activation. Regarding future developments of the project, the validation interview suggests several potentials. One could start by implementing some individual offerings within the complex system of La Biga, such as the creation of a common gathering space for the local community, the introduction of a professional figure committed to supporting the local population, and the availability of a room for proximity services. These proposals could be implemented in a phased manner, at least initially to test their actual feasibility. Moreover, these initiatives, although inspired by the closure of the Pietraporzio bakery, can be adapted and implemented in other places around the Upper Valley territory, exploiting the potential of numerous empty and unused spaces for the benefit of the community.

In addition, it is worth considering the reproducibility of the service in different contexts, a challenge that may be complex given its interactive nature and its close relationship with the local area. However, La Biga's system could be replicated in other marginal areas due to its wide range of offerings and systemic nature. By repurposing new interpretations of the context and continuous interaction with local actors, it is possible to extend the impact of the core service to other marginal contexts similar to the Upper Stura Valley of Demonte. However, this process requires the active involvement of designers who are qualified to interpret the specific needs of local communities, design suitable solutions, and generate scenarios that facilitate collaboration among different stakeholders. In addition, with consideration of service scalability, connections and networks would be developed between places that are distant but featured by similar challenges and characteristics. These places would become key nodes within a larger network, facilitating the sharing of resources, experiences, and solutions among communities facing similar challenges.

Throughout these months, the agency capability typical of design stood out, making it an outstanding discipline in identifying and meeting real and tangible needs of communities. During this time I have had the opportunity to work closely with the Upper Stura Valley community aiming to transform creative visions into practical solutions designed to improve the daily lives of its



Fig. 140 The Ponteb Bernardo valley seen from the Barricades. Photo by the author

people. My hope is that this collaborative process has not only addressed immediate and concrete needs, but may stimulate the development of a creative community, in which people are inspired to imagine and build their future together. In the course of the research, it was also seen how at the heart of all social innovation, there is a unifying principle: all change, no matter how radical, begins at the local scale, and the most effective solutions arise from the will of the community itself. Consequently, my role as a designer over the past few months has been to act as a catalyst for meaningful change, emphasizing the power that local actions can have in generating positive impacts.

In conclusion, in a context often dominated by negative narratives about the decline of remote and mountain territories, with this project I hope to challenge these stereotypes and hopefully reinvigorate the local community's belief in future changes.

## ITA

*Nel corso degli ultimi mesi, dedicati alla ricerca di questa tesi, ho avuto l'opportunità di vivere nuovamente il territorio dell'Alta Valle Stura di Demonte che considero casa, esplorandone ogni sua sfaccettatura. Il mio arrivo ad agosto, un periodo caratterizzato da grande fermento e vitalità, ha segnato l'inizio di questa ricerca che prosegue fino ad ora, giorni in cui scrivo queste ultime pagine, dove l'inverno ha ricoperto le strade di neve, rendendo i paesi tranquilli e silenziosi. In questi giorni il trambusto di agosto sembra essere solo un ricordo lontano, tuttavia, il territorio si prepara a risvegliarsi con l'arrivo della bella stagione.*

*La mia connessione con questo luogo è profonda, trasmessami da mio nonno, originario di qui. Ho trascorso qui tutte le mie estati da bambina fino all'adolescenza. Col tempo, ho cominciato a sentirmi sempre più legata a questo territorio e alla sua comunità, non solo durante l'estate ma anche nei periodi meno affollati, fino a diventare ufficialmente residente nel 2020. Tuttavia, a causa dei miei studi solo in questi ultimi mesi ho vissuto qui in modo così continuo.*

*Questa esperienza mi ha permesso di vivere l'alta valle nella sua forma più vera e di comprenderne in profondità le dinamiche, rivelando sia le sue potenzialità che le sue criticità, avvicinandomi alle realtà quotidiane degli abitanti, le loro abitudini e necessità.*

*Il progetto iniziale di questa tesi, incentrato sul contrasto allo spopolamento e sull'attrazione dei giovani in montagna, ha subito una svolta di fronte alla consapevolezza delle sfide sostanziali che quest'area affronta: la carenza di servizi essenziali e la frammentazione del tessuto sociale. Infatti, una delle principali osservazioni emerse durante questi mesi di ricerca è la perdita di un senso di comunità. Un tempo vitale in questi luoghi isolati, si fa sentire, rimpiazzata da un mondo sempre più connesso ma meno coeso, dove la vita comunitaria tradizionale lascia il posto ad un crescente individualismo e a relazioni virtuali.*

*Tuttavia, questa passività è anche dovuta alla mancanza di un luogo di aggregazione dove le persone possano incontrarsi e condividere momenti di comunità. Questo aspetto è stato uno dei principali temi evidenziati durante le sessioni di co-design svolte insieme alla comunità locale, turisti e villeggianti. L'assenza di spazi pubblici, oltre a contribuire ulteriormente alla sensazione di isolamento, riduce la possibilità di una cittadinanza attiva. Sono proprio questi luoghi di incontro che permettono alle persone di unirsi attivamente in iniziative per il bene comune, lavorando e crescendo insieme. Partecipare in queste attività comuni crea un senso di appartenenza ad un'impresa collettiva, impegnata verso la realizzazione di un futuro migliore e più equo, motivando gli individui a dedicarsi a questa causa. Come evidenziato da Barbera (2023): gli spazi pubblici giocano un ruolo cruciale nell'incoraggiare le interazioni sociali, come le relazioni di supporto, lo sviluppo di legami comunitari e l'aiuto reciproco.*

*Un'osservazione emersa durante un laboratorio di co-design ha colpito particolarmente la mia attenzione: "Se la popolazione è scarsa, ha davvero senso potenziare i servizi?". Questo commento riflette la complessità della sfida che ci attende, sottolineando l'importanza di un approccio che non si limiti alla mera offerta di servizi, ma che miri a ricostruire il tessuto sociale e culturale del territorio, rendendolo nuovamente un luogo dove vale la pena vivere e attrarre nuove risorse umane.*

*La necessità di nuovi abitanti sul territorio rappresenta un altro aspetto cruciale per la rinascita e la rigenerazione delle aree in questione. Una comunità che si caratterizza per la sua diversità e per la presenza di una rete complessa di interdipendenze non solo arricchisce il tessuto sociale ed economico del territorio, ma lo rende più resiliente di fronte alle sfide (Odell, 2021). Per poter immaginare e costruire un futuro desiderabile in questi luoghi, è fondamentale adottare un atteggiamento aperto verso gli estranei e i potenziali nuovi scenari che possono presentarsi. Ciò implica la necessità di essere pronti ad accogliere cambiamenti e nuove prospettive, promuovendo un ambiente più inclusivo che valorizzi e integri un nuovo capitale umano nel contesto locale.*

*Partendo da questi punti di riflessione e sulla base della ricerca da me svolta in questi mesi, emerge chiaramente come il rafforzamento dei servizi essenziali e la ricostruzione di una comunità coesa siano i pilastri su cui basare la rigenerazione di questo territorio e della sua popolazione. Di conseguenza, questo progetto aspira a stabilire le fondamenta per un rinnovamento più ampio e completo, creando un ambiente fertile e accogliente che possa facilitare l'arrivo e l'integrazione di nuovi abitanti in futuro.*

*Da queste riflessioni, ricerche e incontri è nata La Biga – La Panetteria di Alta Valle, un centro polifunzionale che offre una gamma diversificata ma complementare di servizi essenziali per la vita del paese. Oltre a fungere da punto vendita di beni di prima necessità, assume un ruolo rilevante come polo culturale e sociale, invitando residenti e turisti a condividere momenti di socialità e a impegnarsi nella costruzione di una comunità attiva.*

*Questo disegno non costituisce una soluzione definitiva, bensì rappresenta l'avvio di un ampio processo di rigenerazione e attivazione. Per quanto riguarda i futuri sviluppi del progetto, l'intervista di validazione suggerisce diverse potenzialità. Si potrebbe iniziare implementando alcune singole offerte all'interno del sistema complesso de La Biga, come la creazione di uno spazio comune di aggregazione per la comunità locale, l'introduzione di una figura professionale dedicata all'accompagnamento della popolazione locale e la disponibilità di una sala per servizi di prossimità. Queste proposte potrebbero essere realizzate in maniera*



*graduale, almeno inizialmente per testarne la fattibilità reale. Inoltre, queste iniziative, seppure ispirate alla chiusura del panificio di Pietraporzio, possono essere adattate e messe in pratica in altri luoghi presenti sul territorio dell'Alta Valle, sfruttando il potenziale di numerosi spazi vuoti e non utilizzati a vantaggio della comunità.*

*Inoltre, vale la pena soffermarsi sulla riproducibilità del servizio in contesti diversi, sfida che può risultare complessa, data la sua natura interattiva e la sua stretta relazione con il territorio locale. Tuttavia, il sistema de La Biga si presta ad essere replicato in altre aree marginali, grazie alla sua ampia offerta e natura sistemica. Riproponendo nuove interpretazioni del contesto e una continua interazione con gli attori locali, è possibile estendere l'impatto del servizio di base ad altri contesti marginali simili all'Alta Valle Stura di Demonte. Questo processo richiede il coinvolgimento attivo dei progettisti, capaci di interpretare i bisogni specifici delle comunità locali, progettare soluzioni adatte e generare scenari che facilitino la collaborazione tra i diversi attori interessati. Inoltre, in un'ottica di scalabilità del servizio, si svilupperebbero connessioni e reti tra luoghi lontani, ma caratterizzati da sfide e caratteristiche simili. Questi luoghi diventerebbero nodi fondamentali all'interno di una rete più ampia, facilitando la condivisione di risorse, esperienze e soluzioni tra comunità che affrontano sfide simili.*

*Nel corso di questi mesi si è distinta la capacità d'azione tipica del design che lo rende una disciplina eccellente nell'identificare e soddisfare bisogni reali e tangibili delle comunità. Durante questo periodo ho avuto la possibilità di lavorare a stretto contatto con la comunità dell'Alta Valle Stura con l'obiettivo di trasformare visioni creative in soluzioni pratiche volte a migliorare la vita quotidiana di queste persone. Il mio auspicio è che questo processo collaborativo non abbia solo risposto a esigenze immediate e concrete, ma che possa stimolare la nascita di una comunità creativa, in cui le persone sono stimolate a immaginare e costruire insieme il loro futuro. Nel corso della ricerca si è inoltre visto come nel cuore di ogni innovazione sociale, vi è un principio unificante: ogni cambiamento, per quanto radicale, inizia su scala locale e le soluzioni più efficaci nascono dalla volontà della comunità stessa. Di conseguenza, il mio ruolo da designer, in questi mesi, è stato di agire come catalizzatore di cambiamenti significativi, sottolineando il potere che le azioni locali possono avere nel generare impatti positivi.*

*In conclusione, in un contesto spesso dominato da narrazioni negative sul declino dei territori montani e marginali, con questo progetto spero di sfidare questi stereotipi e di poter ravvivare la fiducia delle comunità locali e cambiamenti futuri.*



*Fig. 141 View of the mountains from Pontenardo Valley. Photo by the author*

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## ENG

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## ITA

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# Annex

## CHAPTER 6

# Co-design with Residents – boundary objects

THE VALLEY OF WISHES AND NEEDS - CREATIVE SESSION

Fig. A1 “The Valley of wishes” poster. Design by the author



Fig. A2 “The Valley of needs” poster. Design by the author



Fig. A3 “The Valley of Wishes and Needs” poster after the activity. Photo by the author



BUILD YOUR OWN BAKERY - EXPERIMENTATION SESSION

Fig. A4 "The Chit-chat bakery" poster. Design by the author

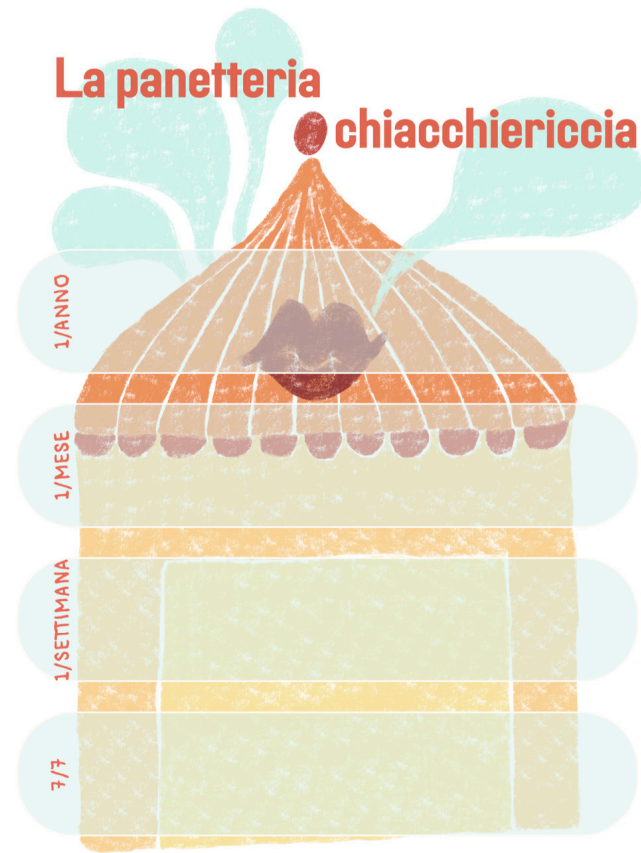


Fig. A5 "The Chit-chat bakery" service cards. Design by the author



Fig. A6 "The moving activity" poster. Design by the author



Fig. A7 "The moving activity" service cards. Design by the author



Fig. A7 "The Mini-hub" poster. Design by the author



Fig. A8 "The Mini-hub" service cards. Design by the author



Fig. A9 "The essential shop" poster. Design by the author



Fig. A10 "The essential shop" service cards. Design by the author





# Co-design with Holidaymakers – boundary objects

## PICK YOUR CHARACTER - PRESENTATION&ICEBREAKER

Fig. A15 “Which vacationer are you?” frame before the activity. Retrieved: figma.

Fig. A16 “Which vacationer are you?” frame after the activity. Retrieved: figma.

## THE KISS METHOD - IDEATION SESSION

Fig. A17 “The Kiss Method” frame before the activity. Retrieved: figma.

Fig. A18 “The Kiss Method” frame after the activity. Retrieved: figma.

# Co-design with short term tourists – boundary objects

## THE EXPERIENCE I WISH - PROTOTYPING SESSION

**Sessione di sperimentazione**  
**L'esperienza che vorrei**  
 20 min  
 Scegliere un luogo, un attore e un'azione per costruire l'esperienza che vorresti vivere in Alta Valle Susa. Contribuisci a dare le esperienze che vorresti!

**Luogo - dove**  
 Casa, Sala comunale, Agriturismo, Bar, Ristorante, Nella natura, Altro

**Persona - chi**  
 Residente, Villeggiante, Turista breve, Professionista, Altro

**Azione - cosa**  
 tavole esterne, laboratori d'artigianato, esperienze in laboratori, laboratori di cucina, altro, proiezione film/documentari, spettacoli di musica e teatro, escursioni ultraleggero, corsi e formazioni, mostre, laboratori, escursioni didattiche, gruppi sportivi, foraging, presentazioni progetti, escursioni/esperto, laboratori di lettura, degustazioni, case tematiche, presentazioni libri, temi, escursioni botaniche, laboratori degli oggetti, escursioni geologiche, creazione di opere collettive

Fig. A19 "The Experience I wish" frame before the activity. Retrieved: figma.

## PICK YOUR CHARACTER - PRESENTATION&ICEBREAKER

**Icebreaker**  
**And you, which mountain person are you?**  
 15 mins  
 Create your character by choosing a gif and telling a 15s anecdote about an experience you had in the mountains.

**THE CHARACTER**  
 THE HEADS, THE EXTREME SPORTS, THE RELAXED, THE ADVENTURER, THE ULTRA-TECH, THE HAPPY-HOUR SPORTS

**A MERRYDAY**  
 (List of icons representing various activities)

**Participant 1**  
 LAURA BELGIUM 28  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 The first time I went to the mountains was a good experience. I'm going to be ready for everything, my backpack is always full and heavy.

**Participant 2**  
 MATHEO BRUSSELS 26  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 I don't have any mountain gear so for the moment in the mountains there is always good chance to have a nice approach.

**Participant 3**  
 BIANCA BELGIUM 24  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 I am the adventure cause I love the adrenaline then I like to have fun and sometimes I like to have a good beer.

**Participant 4**  
 ELENA PARMA 24  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 As I am not a good climber the mountains has a good challenge. I'm going to be ready for everything, my backpack is always full and heavy.

**Participant 5**  
 ARIANNA PADOVA 23  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 It's a matter for the mountains. I don't know how to climb but I like to go there and I like the view. It's a nice day which ended with the rainbow.

**Participant 6**  
 JULES ET JEANNE FRANCE 22  
 MY MERRYDAY IN THE MOUNTAINS  
 I usually like to know where I go. That's why we choose the map. But we don't want to go to the mountains and I like the view. It's a nice day which ended with the rainbow.

Fig. A21 "Which mountaineer are you?" frame after the activity. Retrieved: figma.

**Sessione di sperimentazione**  
**L'esperienza che vorrei**  
 20 min  
 Scegliere un luogo, un attore e un'azione per costruire l'esperienza che vorresti vivere in Alta Valle Susa. Contribuisci a dare le esperienze che vorresti!

**Luogo - dove**  
 Casa, Sala comunale, Agriturismo, Bar, Ristorante, Nella natura, Altro

**Persona - chi**  
 Residente, Villeggiante, Turista breve, Professionista, Altro

**Azione - cosa**  
 tavole esterne, laboratori d'artigianato, esperienze in laboratori, laboratori di cucina, altro, proiezione film/documentari, spettacoli di musica e teatro, escursioni ultraleggero, corsi e formazioni, mostre, laboratori, escursioni didattiche, gruppi sportivi, foraging, presentazioni progetti, escursioni/esperto, laboratori di lettura, degustazioni, case tematiche, presentazioni libri, temi, escursioni botaniche, laboratori degli oggetti, escursioni geologiche, creazione di opere collettive

Fig. A20 "The Experience I wish" frame after the activity. Retrieved: figma.

TEMPORARY INHABITANT - IDEATION SESSION

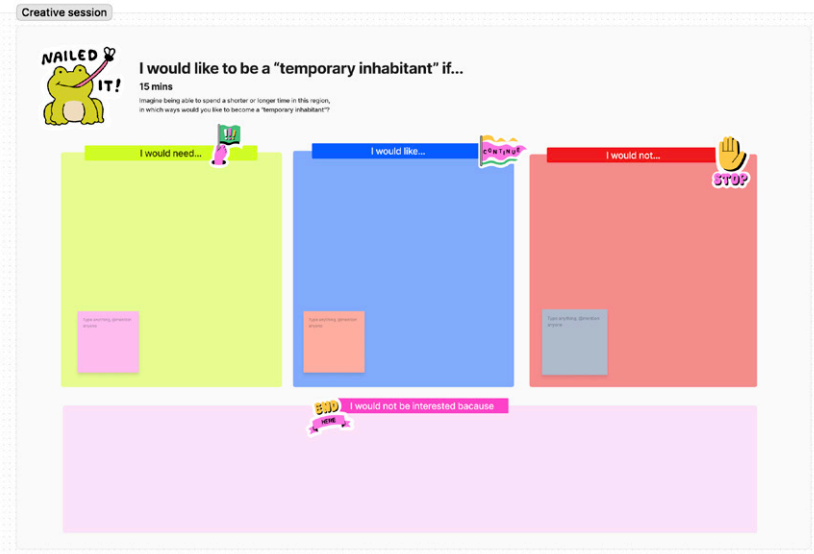


Fig. A22 "I would like to be a temporary Inhabitant if..." frame before he activity. Retrieved: figma.

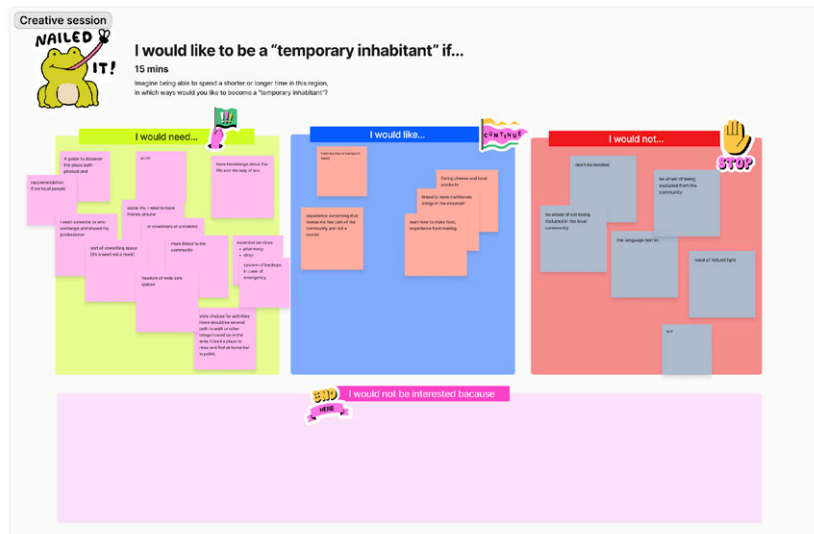


Fig. A23 "I would like to be a temporary Inhabitant if..." frame after he activity. Retrieved: figma.

THE EXPERIENCE I WISH - PROTOTYPING SESSION

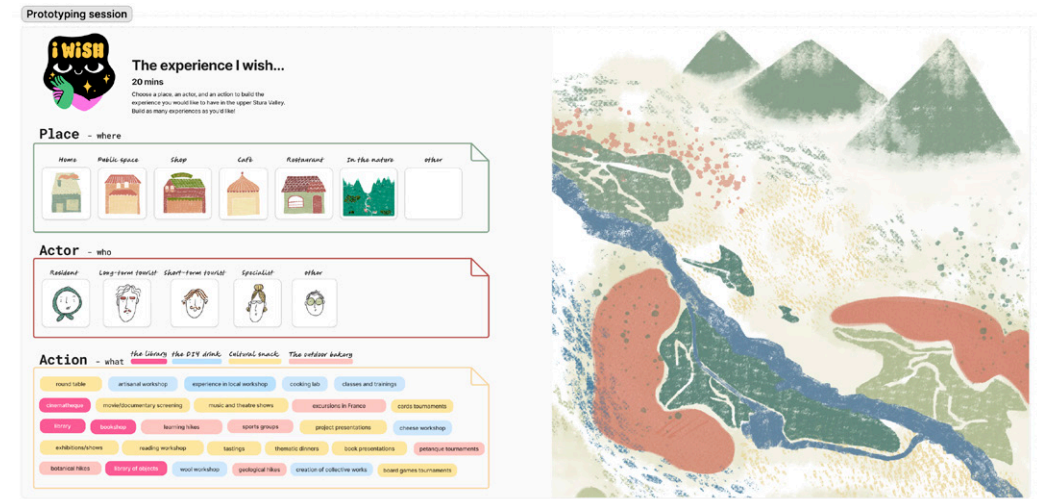


Fig. A24 "The Experience I wish" frame before the activity. Retrieved: figma.



Fig. A25 "The Experience I wish" frame after the activity. Retrieved: figma.



# Co-design with Administrations – boundary objects

IN 2050 IN THE UPPER VALLEY - IDEATION SESSION

Fig. A27 “What If in 2050... in the Upper Stura Valley” poster.  
Design by the author



Fig. A28 “What If in 2050... in the Upper Stura Valley” poster after the activity.  
Photo by the author



THE CREATIVE RELAY - PROTOTYPING SESSION

Fig. A29 “The creative Relay” map before the activity. Design by the author





Fig. A30 "The creative Relay" map on how to create a partnership for local products with France (after the activity). Photo by the author

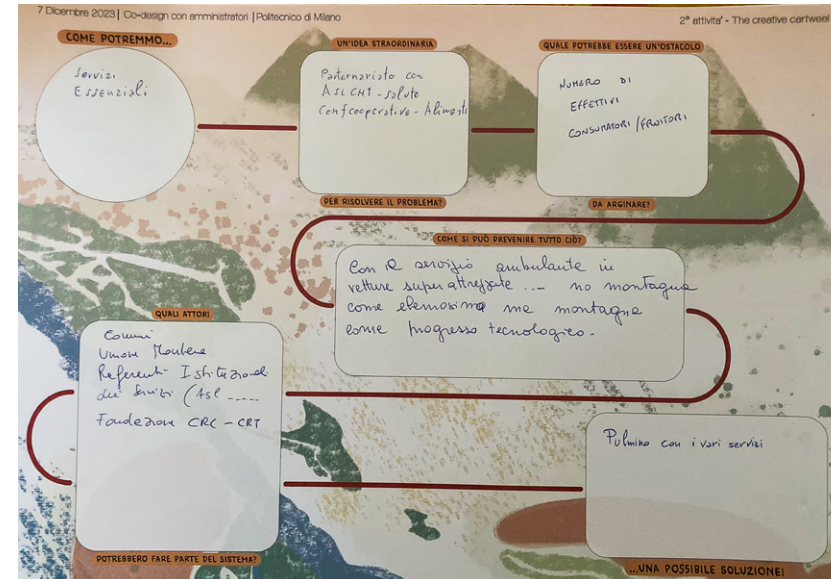


Fig. A32 "The creative Relay" map on how to develop essential services (after the activity). Photo by the author

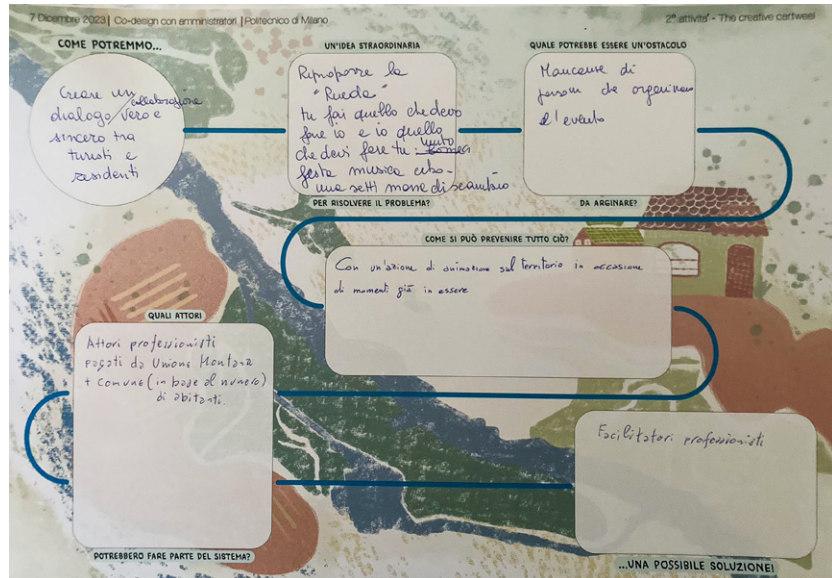


Fig. A31 "The creative Relay" map on how to create a dialogue in between tourists and residents (after the activity). Photo by the author

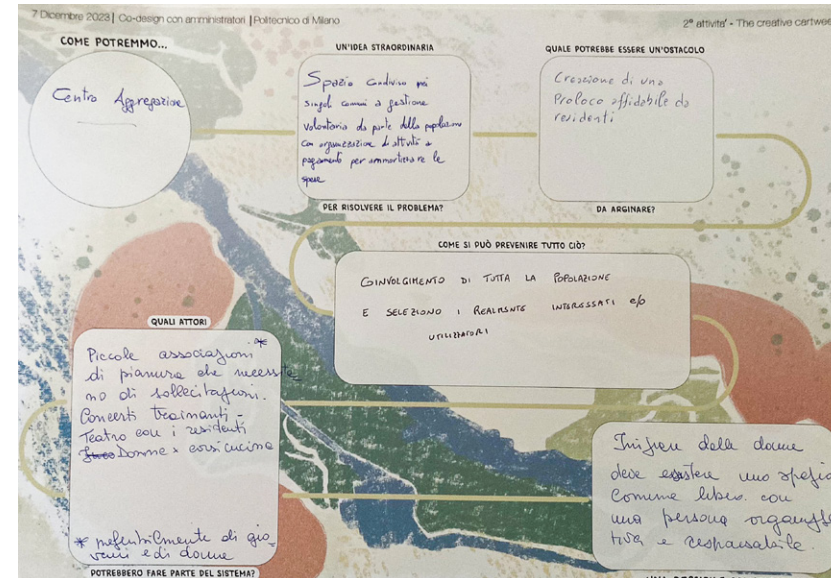


Fig. A33 "The creative Relay" map on how to create a common recreational space (after the activity). Photo by the author



**POLITECNICO**  
MILANO 1863

SCUOLA DEL DESIGN  
DIPARTIMENTO DI DESIGN