

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Tasteful suggestions

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This research project springs from the extraordinary interest in topics such as food, typical agricultural products, local specialities; questions which have become fashionable, imbuing the cultural phenomena, social practices and physical transformations of the contemporary world.

The study first deals with these topics from a general theoretical point of view, then concentrates on case studies from central and western Piemonte, with particular reference to places such as the Langhe and the Alpine valleys in the Cuneo area, but also on episodes – for example Eataly – which have recently involved the metropolitan area of Torino.

If we examine the question not only through the disciplinary lenses, but also with the attention reserved for mass social phenomena, it could be said that this increased interest in food and alimentary cultures has gone hand in hand with the extraordinary success of the topic of landscapes, in the various declinations of greenery, of environmental sustainability, of the 'fine' historical landscape. This is a trend that was consolidated towards the end of the eighties, and which continues to enjoy constantly renewed success.

Now, it is evident that between these two topics, between these two 'fads' there are similarities and strong points of contact and connection. Some are immediately evident – for example Chianti or the Langhe – others are less so, and perhaps still need to be discovered and investigated.

What happens if we try to intersect these two topics, attempting to go beyond the consolidated images and the geographies or the clichés presented by television and advertising? What are the effective points of connection, the mechanisms by which this relationship operates? And above all: how has this rediscovered interest in food influenced and altered the territory? Or, was it also a different perception and conceptualisation of the territory – the attention for the local, the rediscovery of the 'traditions' – that laid the foundations for the food and wine phenomenon?

From the meticulous and minute observation of this ongoing interaction between territories and phenomena we can make various considerations.

A first point concerns the existence and the progressive strengthening of the territories which, by their very nature, seem to be other with respect to the categorizations attempted so far. The categories of the diffuse city, of the rururban, of the marginal spaces with respect to these territories and phenomena do not seem to be sufficient. For these regions the researcher Emanuel Lancerini coined the expression "slow territories". A metaphor, an image that recalls the models of development and habitability that differ from those traditionally intended.

The second element that results is the emergence, from a figurative point of view, of a new *character* for these built-up landscapes, which combines recovery of the heritage, reinvention of the traditions and elaboration of new projectuality, and which from the *flavour venues* (wine cellars, restaurants, agritourism farms, etc.) in recent years seems to have extended the linguistic repertory of ordinary transformations.

What are the flavours, the images, the logics that lie behind these phenomena? The principal fact is that this new character is a hybrid which in turn produces new hybrids, where the process of selection, dismantling and putting together the materials and the configurations and the configuration of the tone and the atmosphere are fundamental.

Prior to this research it was essential to understand the logics of these places, avoiding the usual operation of removal of architectural culture.

Understanding the logics, building contextual strategies capable of truly facing the subjects of these places and the vital and dynamic character that runs through them, becomes a key question for focussing pertinent projectual modalities, capable of hinging on the processes of local development and holding together the not merely rhetorical data on the conservation and the innovation.

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