

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Master of Science in Architecture
Honors theses

Images from the territory: the imaginary how forms of territory structuring in a some areas of Piedmont and Veneto

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This thesis is mainly based on a research work and it is part of a wider project entitled: "Images from the territory. The imaginary how forms of territory structuring" (from the original: "*Immagini dal territorio. L'immaginario come forma di strutturazione del territorio*") realized and defined by Professor Alberto Borghini years ago. It consists of a collection of folklore material such as stories, legends, traditions, superstitions and events of popular medicine and in general of all those oral statements bound to the popular imaginary world. Though apparently useless they are part of our cultural legacy which should be worth saving.

The identity of a territory has to be drawn out of the traces of its history as well as the whole of the Arts heritage scattered through it, but it has also to be found in the anthropological cultural background which unquestionably characterizes it. Certainly the knowledge of the territory is even supported by the analysis of the folklore as well as the local traditions of the peoples living there and it represents the indispensable tool for an urban and architectural planning being fully aware.

This work aims at pointing out such a feature of the planning which has been disregarded for long or completely ignored.

The main phase of the survey has been carried out directly on the territory, based on the record of elements handed on orally. The sources, which I got information from, have been carefully selected, mainly represented by simple people of rural origins.

The area I examined is the Piedmont region, in particular the province of Novara, together with the Veneto region as Novara has been a place of immigration from that land in the past. From the accounts of the people, who showed me their willingness to be helpful, their memories emerged. The places which belonged to the past, the places of their childhood and their youth. From many of these narrations referring to the imaginary world, the structures of the past clearly appear as well as the ways of living and perceiving the territory of the different communities. It results in an imaginary description of the territory which can be seized in its most specific and detailed peculiarities; a sort of geography of the imaginary world where some (meaningful) landscape elements emerge, thus producing narration and being possibly considered as a work, at the same time, of the narration itself.

Then the collected material has been compared and coordinated according to system dynamics where, in the background, the cultural historical way of the fantastic appropriation of the territory and landscape lies.

However the focus of our interest is always the relationship between the imaginary world and the territory which, as for planning, can be better highlighted by conceiving, as an example, a new kind of tourism such as the creation of thematic paths. They could revalue little well-known areas, yet interesting from a territorial, landscape and architectural point of view, in order to recover their peculiarities and attractiveness which could represent an effective alternative to places already known and widely exploited.

Some examples:

The places of *San Giulio*:



Badia di Dulzago - On the last Sunday in January, on the occasion of the festivity of *San Giulio*, the ancient *fagiolata* [beans soup festival] takes place to avoid the invasion of the snakes.

Isle of *San Giulio* – The legend says that Saint Giulio went across the lake to the isle on his mantle and freed it from the snakes which infested it

The places of the witches:



Briga Novarese – On the church of *San Tommaso* there were some witches who danced on the roof.

Casalvolone – The witches sat on the ruins of the walls of the ancient *ricetto* [Medieval shelter, typical of Piedmont] with their long legs which touched the ground.

Landiona – Here the witches sat on the castle tower, their legs reaching the square

Where were children born?



Suno – Children were born under the *Preja da Scalavè*, an erratic boulder.
Briga Novarese – Children were born in a hole in the ruins of the *San Colombano* castle.
Borgomanero – Here they were born under the *Preja Curniola*

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