

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
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Honors theses

Sustainability with comics: project of sequential narration to teach the sustainable development

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Comic language is simple: two or more images, side by side, which describe a change in space or time. The instructions for the rescue on aircrafts and even Trajan's column can be considered comic books.

This thesis is a journey to discover the educational potential of the comic media, to communicate the principles of sustainability.

The research started from the exhibition "Innovation and Design", implemented within the DIPRADI in Politecnico di Torino, that toured several schools in the Piedmont, to make students reflect on the possibility of creating now a sustainable future.

Putting the children at the centre of the project, comics were chosen as a way to learn and have fun.

There are four basic themes: the biological network, the cyclical nature, diversity and cooperation in the me / we, or shared responsibility.

To communicate them in a cartoon, we examined the foundations of narratology and the potential of the comics media.

The 3 acts structure has been chosen as a general scheme to build a story.

According to this scheme, a story is built around an initial situation (Act One), which undergoes a change (First Turning Point). This change gives the protagonist a reason to act and face a series of trials or events (Second Act) that lead to a further change (Second Turning Point). Then, the narration converges towards the end (Act Three).

Supergulp, a series of motion-comics aired on Rai in the late '70s, which anticipated the current developments on the web, was chosen as a model.

With all these tools, the next step was to find the right concept for the story, to communicate sustainable values. Among several hypotheses, the most interesting was the one about non-existence: if the anti-ecological behavior will not change, humanity will cease to exist.

The story was built as a true narrative architecture. As a first step, in the realization of the structure, four type of stories about changing were considered. Among these, "The Family Man" plot was the chosen one.

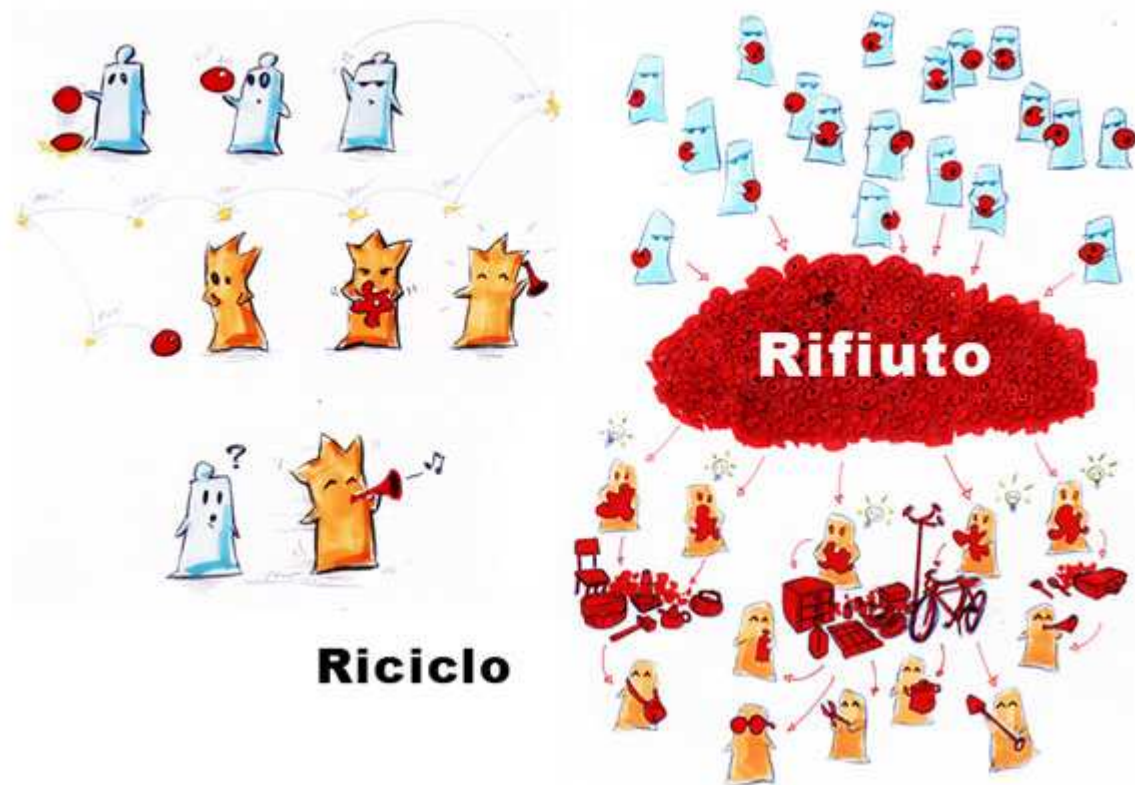
Once you have a general structure, it was necessary to "fill" the various segments of history, following the path of three-act structure and others peculiar parameters.

The first act was designed to introduce the main character, the environment and the supporting characters. To create identification with the target, we selected a teenage protagonist, going out with friends and waiting for a bus.

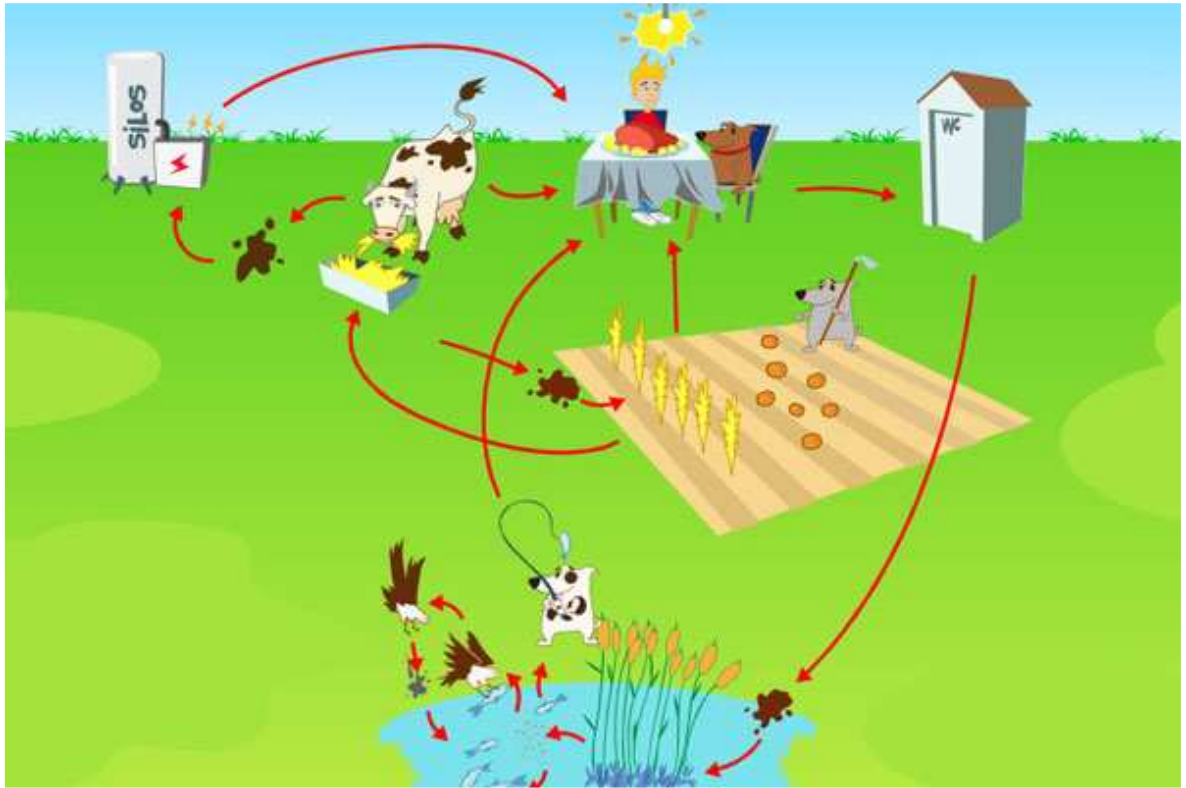
The First Turning Point introduces changing and the guide-character: teenager's city and friends disappears, while he finds himself alone with his dog, who begins to speak.

The Second Act should make the main character explore a different reality from his daily life, a sustainable reality explained by the guide-character. The dog involves the teenager in a series of sketches that explain the four basic themes in a simple and intuitive way.

The Second Turning Point clears the drastic change and bring the protagonist back to the starting point, but with the experience gained during the journey. Choosing the fundamental themes of the exhibition, the protagonist faces daily situations, and wonders which is the most appropriate behavior to hold, according to the sustainability. In the final scene the teenager is again with his friends and suggests to them and to the readers that each person must do his part to change the system. To learn more, you can see the clip on Youtube:



The language of comics can describe concepts such as recycling quickly and intuitively



System design in the motion comic: the rejection of a system can become the nourishment of another



The main characters in the motion-comic

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To learn more, you can see the clip on Youtube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKmr19O8f6Q>
Or consult the slides of the multimedia presentation:
<http://www.slideshare.net/spacechili/sostenibilit-a-fumetti>