

EDITED BY SALVATORE ZINGALE

DESIGN

CASE STUDIES, PROJECT
EXPERIENCES, COMMUNICATION
CRITICISM

MEETS ALTERITY

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Design della comunicazione

La collana Design della comunicazione nasce per far emergere la densità del tessuto disciplinare che caratterizza questa area del progetto e per dare visibilità alle riflessioni che la alimentano e che ne definiscono i settori, le specificità, le connessioni. Nel grande sviluppo della cultura mediatica la presenza del Design della comunicazione è sempre più trasversale e in continua espansione. La comunicazione richiede un sapere progettuale là dove la cultura si fa editoria, dove i sistemi di trasporto si informatizzano, dove il prodotto industriale e i servizi entrano in relazione con l'utente. Il Design della comunicazione è in azione nella grande distribuzione dove il consumatore incontra la merce, nella musica, nello sport, nello spettacolo, nell'immagine delle grandi manifestazioni come nella loro diffusione massmediale. La collana è un punto di convergenza in cui registrare riflessioni, studi, temi emergenti; è espressione delle diverse anime che compongono il mondo della comunicazione progettata e delle differenti componenti disciplinari a esso riconducibili. Oggetto di studio è la dimensione artefattuale, in tutti i versanti del progetto di comunicazione: grafica editoriale, editoria televisiva, audiovisiva e multimediale, immagine coordinata d'impresa, packaging e comunicazione del prodotto, progettazione dei caratteri tipografici, web design, information design, progettazione dell'audiovisivo e dei prodotti interattivi, dei servizi e dei sistemi di comunicazione complessa, quali social network e piattaforme collaborative.

Accanto alla dimensione applicativa, l'attenzione editoriale è rivolta anche alla riflessione teorico-critica, con particolare riguardo alle discipline semiotiche, sociologiche e massmediologiche che costituiscono un nucleo portante delle competenze del designer della comunicazione.

La collana si articola in due sezioni. I SAGGI accolgono contributi teorici dai diversi campi disciplinari intorno all'area di progetto, come un'esplorazione sui fondamenti della disciplina. Gli SNODI ospitano interventi di raccordo disciplinare con il Design della comunicazione.

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Edited by Salvatore Zingale

Design Meets Alterity

Case Studies, Project Experiences, Communication Criticism

FrancoAngeli 

The Landscape between Identity and Alterity For an Atmosphere Design

Finding words for what is before our eyes: how difficult it can be.
But when they arrive, then it is as if they hit with little hammer
blows against the surface of reality...

Walter Benjamin, *San Gimignano*

1. The landscape as an atmosphere

The *atmosphere* of landscapes¹ is linked to places: more evidently it relates to the memories and identities of the communities that have shared stories and cultures there. But on closer inspection it is easy to understand how it is closely linked to “otherness”, to “hybrid” and less evident cultural evolutions that leave *different* marks on the territory. The first chapter of this intervention proposes reflections on the relationship between *cultural landscape and atmosphere*, understood as a threshold for accessing the identities and otherness of territories. The aim is to provide design indications for communication design that deals with describing territories, in their cultural complexity, through perceptive points of view, visual languages and different narrative insights. The in-depth analysis, in the following chapters, concerns the atmospheres of the landscapes which, due to their changeable, impressive and subjective nature, do not highlight a prevailing territorial identity, nor a single cultural or emotional point of view. Rather they consist of a colourful gallery of instantaneous representations, which establishes an interesting visual vocabulary of landscape otherness, or of relationships between subjective emotional spaces and the environment.

The second part is dedicated to the state of the art and to the analysis of case studies.

¹ Council of Europe Landscape Convention: <<https://rm.coe.int/1680080621>>, online on 31 December 2023.

The third and final part presents a design experimentation that uses images of atmospheric contents, starting from literary descriptions, as a *hybrid* writing system, which evolves from illustrated notations and text.

In conclusion, the research initiates a possible theoretical framework where the atmosphere manifests itself as *spatial otherness* (Deleuze [1966] 2001).

1.1. *Landscapes*

Many years have passed since the *European Landscape Convention* was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the first international treaty dedicated to the European landscape. According to the Convention (Chap. 1. Art. 1.a – Definitions), the «“Landscape” means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors».

The landscape is therefore: «an essential component in the life of people, an expression of the diversity of their common cultural and natural heritage and foundation of their identity» (Chap. 2. Art. 5.a – General provisions).

In general, social, cultural and political evolution has contributed to further defining modern landscapes as containers of “super-diversity”; not static, but changing, from a predominantly multicultural context. The different roots and traditions, co-present in the collective environmental heritage, elude the possibility of circumscribing uniform and constant socio-environmental characteristics, on the contrary they develop *hybridizations and mutations*:

a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade. (Vertovec 2007)

The experience of the landscape is therefore influenced by a multitude of points of view and cultural patterns; it is a «socio-culturally produced object» (Galasso 2018: 141) in which historical social identities and otherness are mutually complementary synergistic expressions. *Cultural patterns*, precisely because of their heterogeneity, can give rise to a carousel of shapes and impressions that manifest *atmospheres* that are at times

familiar and at times extraneous to the dominant “domestic aesthetic”. Taken together, they define a sort of *environmental aesthetic*, identifiable and recognizable from the first exploration (Lynch [1960] 1969), but dependent on cultural variables and subjectivity and therefore changeable. We will call the structured system of possible portrayals of the same place *atmospheric otherness*.

Associating the cultural otherness of the landscapes with the summation of the different atmospheric impressions refers to the Gestalt perceptual principle which organizes the meanings of the single parts into expressive categories of the whole. The atmosphere of the landscapes expresses impressive transitory qualities capable of continuously *redefining* the overall aesthetics of the places, albeit tenaciously based on *invariant*, geographical, physical and symbolic *properties*. The ensemble of atmospheres is the “paradigmatic landscape”, a synthesis of the many othernesses. A synthesis that considers every part, every atmospheric instant, indispensable for establishing the overall meaning. The atmospheres of a landscape therefore have interesting characteristics; the ensemble of points of view is an ensemble of otherness and the ensemble of atmospheric depictions defines the *aesthetics of cultural iconographies*.

The atmosphere can be perceived from a distance, without crossing the places, observing them from afar. The simple “embrace with a gaze” a panorama, can immerse in the *atmospheric sense* (Griffero 2013: 129). But perception is projective and synaesthetic, *almost tactile*, even when observing a pictorial landscape or a photographic image (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 2003). In a sort of increasingly abstract involvement, even the “mental” image of literary places is formed with “atmospheric” attributes that refer to other known places. It is a sense effect, generated by literary descriptions, which draws from the memory of other places to form itself.

«The atmosphere of a city supervenes on the urban materiality» (Griffero 2014: 21) and landscapes manifest themselves in the vocation of «[...] activators of memories, capable of bringing back experiences, relationships, social dynamics, facts of public relevance and daily practices» (Cattunar 2014: 2). In fact, the atmosphere mainly involves this mnemonic and at the same time aesthetic dimension: it is defined as a “spatial feeling” as a «specific emotional quality of a “lived-in space”» that some places express better than others, or in a different way (Griffero [2010] 2017: 43).

In other words, the landscape activates an atmospheric connective of memories, symbolic figurations, visual characters, and this happens even when its mere description, iconographic or textual, is considered. In fact, even a description returns a multitude of representable imaginative meanings, translatable into visual and shareable languages.

The epistemology concerned with narrative (Lancioni 2009) highlights how literature as a whole constitutes a sort of unconscious “atlas of imagined places” favoured by the «imageability of texts» (Bertrand 2002: 99). Places whose atmosphere preserves the explicit references of the landscape, or implicit in the memories of that landscape, to then offer itself as *air that fills the space*, immersing itself in a subjectivity that interprets.

According to Griffero, «... the descriptions of urban spaces offered both by August Endell in 1908 and, more recently, by Kevin Lynch in his environmental investigations based on the notion of “*imageability*”, i.e. the urban quality perceived, independently of cartographic objectivity and resulting from the encounter between the subject and certain objective qualities can be considered atmospheric» (Griffero [2010] 2017: 93). Landscapes are therefore structured systems that refer to other memories and other spaces: they are *living hypertexts* with a superficial structure, referring to the immediacy of the whole image, and a deeper one that intertwines memories (Calabi 2009).

The score of the historical layout of the landscape (or of its *mnemonic* gaps or *amnesias*) nourishes the forms of the atmosphere. The otherness of differences and transformations is juxtaposed to the autochthonous identities that share memories, values and narratives. The identities are recognized as stratified in the landscape system as, rooted and solid, they coincide with the values integrated in the collective expressions. Othernesses, on the other hand, represent “super-diverse” values, alternations, differences; they build the atmospheric landscapes and influence the observer’s feelings.

If identity and otherness are understood as synergistic “cultural dimensions” and in relation to each other, with nature and with the history of places, they both also belong to the spatial, geographical and anthropic dimension of landscapes. Overlapping, they signify the landscape and determine its atmospheres, their recognizability, the sense of belonging or extraneousness; the same concept of *dwelling* feeds on the relationship

between identity, otherness, space and time (Leccardi et al. 2011). For this reason, the landscape is recognized as a “perceptive phenomenon” that belongs to the field of *aesthetic experiences* (D’Angelo 2001).

The dystunity between cultural othernesses has a historical role and has left legible signs in the shape of landscapes. They host cultures with different styles, shapes, relationships and their *appearances* involve more than bodily sensations. Indeed, landscapes generate an involvement of *aesthetic empathy*; a sort of «affective situation, meaning by this the fact of feeling in which environment one finds oneself» (Böhme 2001: 64, author’s translation).

The experience of an atmosphere is then *implicitly* aesthetic because it refers to consciousness, experience, emotions and sensations; because it activates bodily, haptic and proprioceptive perceptions typical of *immersion* in a space (Gander 1999). The term «haptic» (Panofsky [1961] 1989) refers to the meaning of “tangible”, meaning an extended touch on forms and in space, synesthetic, which involves the entire organism. The body reacts by tuning in to the stimuli, as if “invaded” by environmental perceptions.

The depth of the atmospheric experience and its value as an emotional tool can redefine visual languages and hierarchies of meaning in communicating the characteristics of a place. By dissociating itself from the stereotypes that value identity representations for promotional purposes, the design of the atmospheres can translate the different points of view, the cultural otherness, the different narrative versions.

In summary, some open questions can be found on the planning level of the communication design of the identities and otherness of the landscapes.

The first concerns the use of atmospheric representations in the construction of a palimpsest of fragments of memories and narratives that coincide with the prevailing identities. The second highlights the value of the different points of view that generate “atmospheric othernesses”. Other issues concern the value of a design of atmospheres, to restore spaces of meaning and strengthen the sense of belonging and home, beyond the prevailing shared identities.

1.2. Atmospheric effects

The atmospheric experience allows us to hypothesize some definitions of *atmospheric effect*. They include: the atmospheric phenomena that take place in a given moment of time, which alter the climate and which can

be the object of emotional interpretations; the “spatial identities”, which are symbolic, memory and cultural references scattered in the landscape; the “otherness” which include the transformations, the cultural mixtures, the divergences from the identity references which generate dissimilar atmospheric points of view.

Having ascertained that the perception of an atmospheric effect determines “aesthetic relationships” that can influence emotional states (Catalano 2020), those involved can access, in personal resonance or dissonance, the cultures of the places (Jedlowski 1989), the transformations and emotions aroused by atmospheric effects. The landscape then offers itself as «a space in which one enters just like one enters a state of mind» (Catalano 2020: 44) and becomes an area of otherness, i.e. of the unexpected, of discovery, of the relationships between sequences of points of view and representations. In fact, each organizes the references widespread in the landscape, favouring some traces over others and determining predominance of meaning. These predominances emerge semantically from the whole, but at the same time they allow us to glimpse other experiences and other realities with respect to the recognized ones.

We have mentioned two types of “aesthetic atmospheric involvement”: one is direct, in presence, belongs to real three-dimensional space and generates cognitive and emotional experiences based on own-bodily processes. The other type is indirect, i.e. it takes place through portrayals (artistic, iconographic, textual, sound), that is through “other” narratives where the *sense of presence* (which is realized by portraying oneself *immersed* in those places) is given by the *imageability* of the content, i.e. from its possibility of being imagined by appealing to one’s own experience and by similarities.

In both typological cases, identity and otherness combine to define the atmospheric effects, influencing subjective reactions with naturalness and unconscious immediacy.

It should be made clearer that the atmosphere is not “generated” by the attitude of the observer. In fact, it maintains a structure that arises from environmental characteristics and that is constant for everyone, despite the fact that situations and looks can change. In other words, the atmosphere brings with it “stable” information starting from the physical elements of the landscape, which then take on symbolic and conventional meanings that guide the understanding of the signs, such as «affordance»

(Griffero 2013: 129) for the interpretation of the landscape. In addition to the stable signs, the inferences and emotional interpretations of the observer are found and forcefully emerge in the atmospheric representations, so at the same time the indefinite relationships of otherness with which every subjectivity is imbued participate. An example of subjective interpretation is the unconscious search for the sensations that somehow make the environment familiar, transmitting the security of *domesticity* (a strictly personal and different concept for each one). Another example is that of the atmospheric effect of a sunset in nature in the absence of cultural references; on average it inspires the same feeling and involvement in all people. In this case, the visual representation can certainly be lyrical and pay homage to the personal imagination, but it does not reverberate either identity or otherness: it is what the observer expects. However, when in the atmosphere of that natural landscape artistic, symbolic, traces or cultural references become recognizable, even for a single element, everything changes. Then Cittanova on the Via Emilia becomes a container of *other* atmospheres (Luigi Ghirri, *Cittanova*, 1985), such as the Cathédrales de Rouen (Claude Monet, *Série des Cathédrales de Rouen, Effet du matin/à midi/plein soleil*, 1893-1894, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) or the Central Station of Milan (Anna Maria Ortese, *Silenzio a Milano*, 2002). Those cultural signs of identity and otherness are indices that identify a network of symbolic and cultural relationships, in which the sense of extraneousness is mitigated in the familiar and becomes a subjective emotional space.

«The identity of a landscape is given by its singular atmosphere and having experience of it, that is, managing to perceive it in its fullness, means having the possibility of respecting it in its unrepeatable uniqueness» (Catalano 2020: 181).

The character of the atmosphere arises from the correspondence between the environment and the observer with a precise and sensitive availability for *immersive involvement*, in the landscape and in one's own «affective states» (Griffero 2016: 21). These are essentially those personal affective states that make the image of cities different for everyone.

The atmospheric experience of a landscape immediately engages: the perceptive discriminant; the cognitive dimension; the individual self. It is not a process but an imaginative experience, which interprets the place with im-

mediate reactions. Different cultures, identities, layered transformations, weather and otherness translate into bodily and emotional impressions. The genesis of the *first impression* (Griffero 2009) of a landscape is therefore conditioned by *transmutations*: every time something changes and emerges, it dissociates itself from identity and becomes other than itself. The moment changes, the mood changes, the impact changes and the cultural meanings change; involvement in the forms of the landscape and the mnemonic process of references to the memories of one's own experience remains constant. Othernesses that gradually materialize against the backdrop of stratified and evolving identities, in cultural connotations from which atmospheres are determined and new oscillations between identity and otherness develop. Perception is selective and therefore does not consider all the parts that offer themselves to the gaze on the same level, rather orienting itself towards choices of a practical nature that can combine impressions. Therefore the atmosphere materializes as an expression of the relationship between the observer and the landscape, between the known and the unknown, between identity and otherness and allows an *experiential orientation* between the infinite number of points of view. Meanwhile, the landscape is configured as a "phenomenal object", that is, as the place of *atmospheric effects*, where they are perceived and take on meaning.

The landscape «condenses within itself the relations of the society-space-time system» (Fiorani 2005: 9) and is defined in its cultural and aesthetic substance; while the "atmospheric effect" selects the semantic characters and turns them into emotions.

Referring to the city, to its "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007) and cultural otherness, the atmosphere is configured with a set of engaging parameters and signifiers of particular attractiveness; that is, multicultural landscapes possess an iridescent «atmospheric charge» (Griffero [2010] 2017: 91).

Landscapes are special generators of signifiers and for this reason their artistic representations have contributed to the creation of an aesthetic recognizable as a historical, cultural and symbolic heritage of civilizations, in the visual arts as in literature.

While the landscape offers itself in an atmospheric form, the interpretation translates the symbolic emergences of the area into expressions, into expressive languages, into "topographical texts" (Assmann 1997) with a shared meaning.

Then the link between people and places can be strengthened, if not conceived and created, when the translation of the co-present, and different, atmospheric narratives of the landscape, into communicative forms that can be shared between cultural identities and otherness, becomes possible. Atmospheric effects prove to be instruments of cultural sharing.

2. Spatial otherness. Case studies

The well-known list of the seven deadly sins linked pride to Genoa, avarice to Florence (the ancient Germans were of a different opinion and called what is known as Greek love “Florenzen”), voluptuousness to Venice, anger to Bologna, gluttony to Milan, envy to Rome and laziness to Naples.

Walter Benjamin, *Images of cities*

We have seen how landscapes are simultaneously containers of identity and otherness, which emerge as significant elements from the atmospheres of urban landscapes and points of view. They play a fundamental role in building collective awareness starting from explicit memories, which generate awareness and a sense of belonging. The absence of memory is the absence of identity, just as the absence of subjectivity is the deprivation of otherness. For this reason, design, which sets itself the task of giving new meaning to places through the communication of cultures and memories, finds a way of making forgotten and different realities available, gathering new visions and following-up the analysis of archival materials. Materials that constitute a wealth of points of view, which can be activated in the geographical space. *Spatializing memories* means relocating them in the landscape so that they can act as collectors of identities.

The design scope does not end with the placement of geographic coordinate markers; its function is maieutic and allows atmospheres to be imagined in a predictive sense, like a tourist guide foreshadows the destination: it supports dissemination activities, defines points of interest, languages and narrative paradigms. Communicating today means defining relational spaces; the communication design of areas reveals otherwise inaccessible relationships, to promote cultures. Even through atmospheric representation, the purpose of design is to act as a pedagogical tool of cultural diffusion.



Figure 1. Organization of the atmospheric signs in the Urban/Natural Landscape polarity and Natural Atmospheric Effects/Spatial Otherness.

For the designer, interfacing with a landscape means first of all experiencing it; the decoding of the atmospheric space is a further step in the cognitive direction. Identity and cultural otherness are not opposed but synergistic; the communication of urban landscapes cannot be limited to a representation “by contrasts”: I and the Other, the subject and the object. It rather opens up to the prospects of super-diversity, of contamination of signs, verbal and visual multi-writings that require as many design, engaging and experiential approaches, capable of expressing contents accessible to co-presence.

Starting from an “access point”, design initiates a transmedia translation (Ciastellardi 2017), a narration that selects the original narrative patterns (memories and images that belong to the real dimension) to produce new dialogical atmospheric effects. Design is therefore a descriptor, a *narrative* and proceeds by returning experiential devices through the shaping of immersive, but also transformative and participatory artefacts, which provide exciting and impressive representations of the landscape. It is a question of considering the atmospheric representation as a further tool

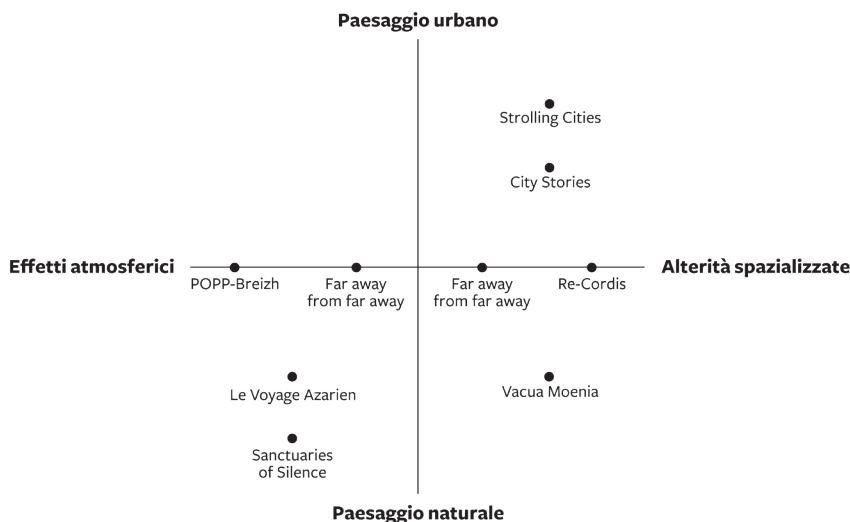


Figure 2. Organization of the case studies in the defined polarities.

for writing the emotion and aesthetics of places, whose characteristic is to convey contents with immediacy.

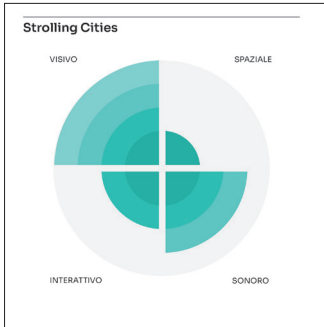
Some communication formats oriented towards the communication of landscape features (natural or urban) have been selected and analysed, which use an effective visual representation to immerse in the atmospheric effects and communicate cultural otherness. This representation takes place above all for the interconnection between images and sounds and is structured with the use of interactive immersive tools such as navigable image galleries, videos, virtual tours, animations, ambient sounds.

The case studies were analysed in landscapes from natural to urban, by types of languages used and contents. The “natural atmospheric effect” (without cultural symbolic references) was placed on the one hand and the presence of “spatial otherness” (with cultural symbolic references) on the other. The characters emerging from the case studies, placed in a Cartesian space, have been arranged according to the aesthetic prevalence of contents with a marked environmental atmospheric effect, or due to the presence of cultural symbols.

2.1. *Strolling Cities*

<<https://strollingcities.com/index.html#first>>

Strolling Cities – the artificial intelligence that generates urban landscapes from words – is placed in communication formats that represent the atmospheres of landscapes to enhance mnemonic contents. The project



was developed by Mauro Martino, with the collaboration of ACTLAB (Politecnico di Milano) and exhibited in the Italian Hall of the 2021 Venice Biennale as an experiment in *visual poetry* generated by artificial intelligence. Ten important Italian cities (Venice, Como, Milan, Genoa, Bergamo, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Catania, Palermo) are illustrated with images collected during the 2020 pandemic. The original photographic images have been reworked

with MindEarth software, so as to develop a continuous and immersive atmospheric visual text, in which urban views merge, while a voiceover recites a literary text.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: photographic timelapse, 360 exploration, VR, sound effects, audio.

Visual rendering: high, full screen images in smooth overlay.

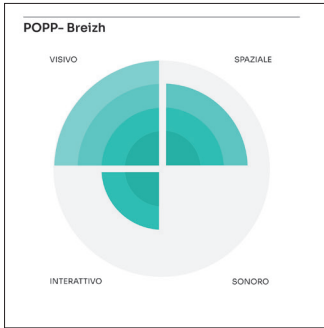
Spatial rendering: environmental panoramic images, not georeferenced.

Sound rendering: high, narrative voice, association with literary texts.

Level of interactivity: low.

Type: website.

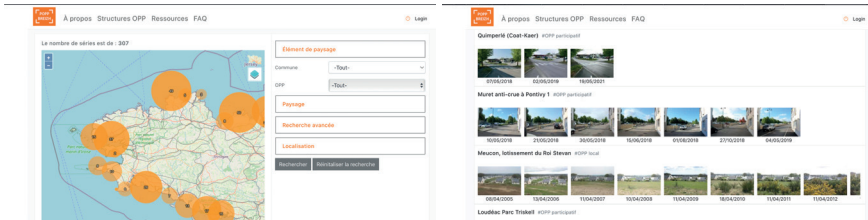
2.2. POPP-Breizh, *Plateforme des Observatoires Photographiques du Paysage de Bretagne*
<<http://popp-breizh.fr/public/popp>>



POPP-Breizh aims to depict atmospheric phenomena. It is an iconographic research of panoramas and environmental details on the Breton coasts.

The cartographic platform collects instantaneous images from the same observation point at regular intervals of time, thus building a special observatory of photographic memories. Environmental atmospheric effects are highlighted and urban

space is referenced via map representation.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: cartographic exploration, image galleries, photographic, fixed shot.

Visual rendering: high, photographic.

Spatial rendering: georeferenced references.

Sound rendering: low or absent.

Level of interactivity: low.

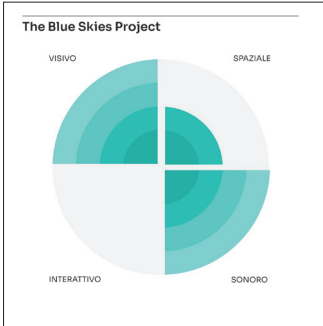
Type: online digital observatory.

2.3. *The Blue Skies Project*, Anton Kusters

<https://antonkusters.com/The-Blue-Skies-Project>

The Blue Skies Project places itself in communication formats that aim to represent, in space and time, natural atmospheric phenomena. It is an installation of 1,068 instant colour photographs that frame the sky. The author introduces an atmospheric sequence disconnected from recognizable visual references but georeferenced. These are representations of the skies above the European death camps; they are described by a narrator. The project abstracts the historical contents from the atmospheric dimension and does not spatialize them directly, that is, it does not visually anchor them to the places.

The communicative rhetoric shifts attention to the natural atmospheric effects, so that the images appear separated from the plane of georeferenced mnemonic contents.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: sequence of photographic images.

Visual rendering: high.

Spatial rendering: georeferenced references.

Sound rendering: high, narrative voice.

Level of interactivity: low.

Type: installation.

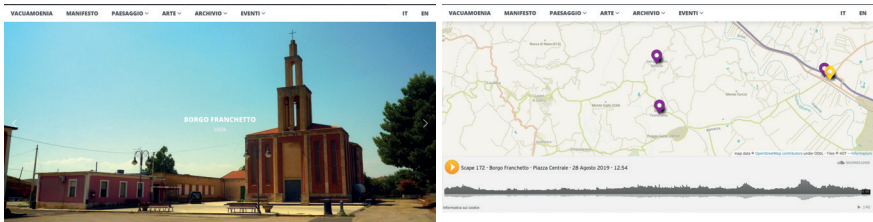
2.4. *Vacua Moenia*

<<https://www.vacuamoenia.net/>>



Vacua Moenia is an archive of photographs and sounds that aims to represent the atmosphere of the rural areas of the Sicilian hinterland. The name, which means “empty walls”, refers to the sounds of the abandoned places. It is an interdisciplinary project (acoustic ecology, landscape history, mnemonic values, historical archives). Atmospheres are fundamentally sound and visual. The atmospheric sounds are

georeferenced and referred to mnemonic presences: images of ruins that document the state of the places.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: environmental sounds, photography, interactive exploration.

Visual rendering: high, photographic.

Spatial rendering: georeferenced references.

Sound rendering: high, environmental sounds.

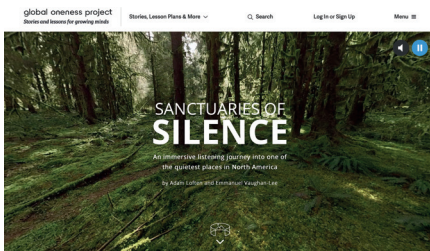
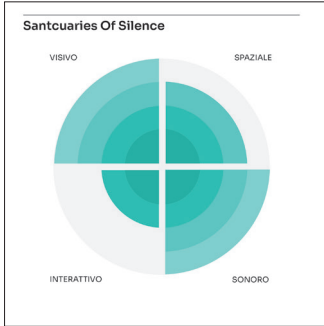
Level of interactivity: low.

Type: website.

2.5. Sanctuaries of Silence

<<https://sanctuariesofsilence.com/>>

Sanctuaries of Silence, 2020 – an immersive listening journey is a project that is placed in the communication formats that represent the natural atmospheres of the landscape. The project is by Adam Loften and Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee. It defines itself as a «documentary container in virtual reality», which allows the *Hoh Rainforest*, Olympic National Park in Washington, to be explored. The exploration path is divided between the “silent atmospheres” of nature, with the guide Gordon Hempton, an expert in acoustic ecology. The dialectic juxtaposition between environmental sounds and silences immerses you in the explorable atmospheres of the landscape. The *Stories* and *Lessons* sections expand upon emotional linguistic rhetoric with engaging interactive videos.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: environmental sound effects, 360 degree exploration, VR.

Visual rendering: high, 360-degree spherical images.

Spatial rendering: environmental panoramic images not georeferenced.

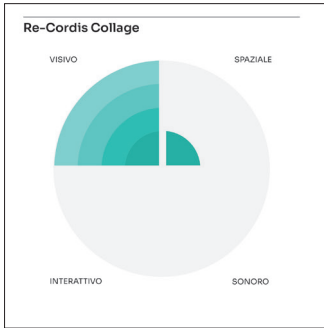
Sound rendering: high, environmental sounds.

Level of interactivity: high.

Type: website.

2.6. Re-Cordis Collage

<https://futuroarcaico.it/opere/re-cordis-collage>



Re-Cordis Collage is to be found among communication formats that represent the atmospheres of cultural and natural landscapes, with the aim of enhancing mnemonic contents. The project dialectically puts together past and present, superimposing them, to the point of confusing them, through a collage of images. It detaches itself from the dimension of the natural atmospheric phenomenon to build a narrative that proceeds by enhancing the domestic atmosphere, made up of family stories and memories.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: photographic collage.

Visual rendering: high, composition of images.

Spatial rendering: images not georeferenced.

Sound rendering: low, absent.

Level of interactivity: low.

Type: website.

2.7. City Stories: Mapping the Narratives of Singapore's Landscapes

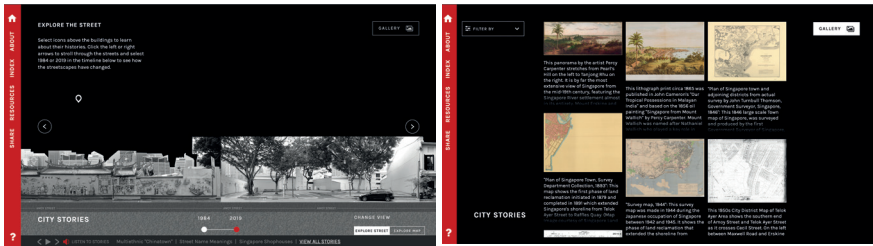
<<http://citystories.sg>>



City Stories is to be found in communication formats that represent the atmosphere of urban landscapes to enhance mnemonic content.

The platform shows the multicultural evolution of two places in the city of Singapore (Telok Ayer and Amoy Streets) with visualization alternatives: *street view* (linear photographic reconstruction of the two streets); *map view* (georeferenced in the urban fabric).

A further level of audio-video study proceeds by historical steps.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: sound effects, photography, map exploration, video.

Visual rendering: high, photographic reconstruction of the routes.

Spatial rendering: high, georeferenced environmental images.

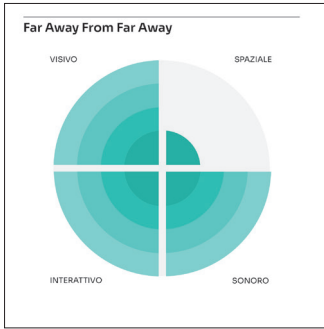
Sound rendering: average, in-depth audio tracks.

Level of interactivity: average.

Type: website.

2.8. *Far Away From Far Away*

<<https://faraway.nfb.ca>>



Far Away From Far Away is to be found in communication formats that represent landscapes through natural atmospheric phenomena. The project is an interactive prose journey in thirty-six chapters, created with the contribution of the inhabitants of Fogo Island, Newfoundland. The atmospheric representation of collective memories makes use of images and audio. The particular visual narrative choice is independent

of any geographical location and therefore mainly renders the effect of natural atmospheric phenomena; at the same time, the narrative voice details the collective memories.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: video, sound effects.

Visual rendering: high, user-controlled images and videos.

Spatial rendering: environmental images not georeferenced.

Sound rendering: high, in-depth audio tracks, narrative voice.

Level of interactivity: high.

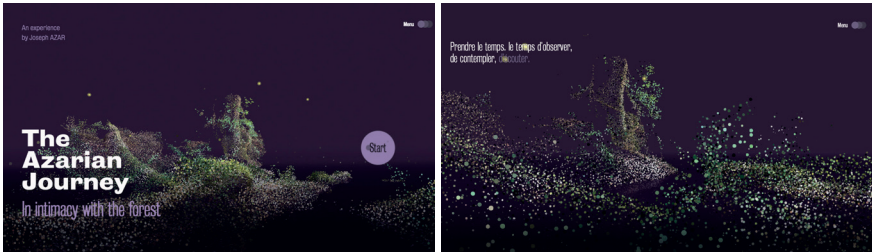
Type: website.

2.9. *Le Voyage Azarien*

<<https://le-voyage-azarien.art>>



This last case study differs substantially from the previous ones because the landscapes are artificial, modelled by the author Joseph Azar. The landscape is the background to the reflections on the forest. *Le Voyage Azarien* renders a particular atmospheric, dreamlike and unreal effect.



Assessment of atmospheric factors

Languages and technologies: 3D lidar technology, sound effects.

Visual rendering: high, dreamlike 3D immersion in space.

Spatial rendering: loss of perception of the real landscape.

Sound rendering: high, in-depth audio tracks, narrative voice.

Level of interactivity: high.

Type: website.

3. Atmospheric narratives of Design. Conclusions

The Station, walls, marbles, columns, vaults, stairways, and again vaults and halls like frozen rivers, seemed to have lost all weight, all gravity, its own gloomy air: it was a delicate and rigid woodcutting.

Anna Maria Ortese, “One night at the station”,
in *Silenzio a Milano* (1958)

The communication of the cultural landscape and its atmospheric representations is an *aesthetic work*. Recognizing aesthetics as a *science of perceivable knowledge*, atmospheres are, therefore, a task that belongs to design (Böhme 2001: 27, 64).

In the designs of the otherness of areas, as in the pictorial, photographic, literary representations, it is the iconographic characters arranged in the *frame* that become part of the atmospheres of a landscape which, from a background, translates into an imaginary space «endowed with spiritual characters that allow it to interact with human events» (Catalano 2020: 185). In many case studies, it has been seen that the atmosphere represents natural landscapes and atmospheric phenomena, where the visual and sound content reproduces the environmental effect. In other cases, some suitably selected elements, such as rural ruins and “tears” in the urban fabric, invent frames that become an *atmospheric point of access* to cultural identities and otherness. The “figurative narrative” is able to make the *otherness of literary places* imaginable but, above all, it manages to become a threshold for experiential immersion in the real place.

In conclusion, I quote an example of applied communication design research that illustrates spatialized literary atmospheres. The sequence of frames with an atmospheric effect is the development of a master’s thesis in Communication Design at the Politecnico di Milano by Elisa Strada (Calabi and Strada 2020). It is a work of atmosphere design, with the creation of an audio/visual interpretation (photographic with narrator) of the most *imageable* textual nodes taken from the book by Anna Maria Ortese: “One night at the station”, from *Silenzio a Milano*. A short text that is an example of otherness: it is an “other”, original, unique point of view. Ortese does not give an identity to the place, but her own vision of the spaces. The quality of Ortese’s text was therefore exploited, characterized by the

presence of a vivid “iconic-semantic virtuality” that evokes emotional images during reading: «in narration, the visual elements are not only described but judged, evaluated, characterized in order to evoke facts, stories, but above all fascination» (Lo Feudo 2013: 58). The story portrays the Central Station of Milan in the 1960s. The descriptions take place during a visit by the author, from which emerge the history of the station and the common thread of the frenetic rhythms between peak times and static moments.

The research project has defined an analysis methodology that proceeds from the segmentation of the text and identifying fractions of writing, distinguished by semantic function. The verbal “sequences” and “frames” describing “nuclei” of atmospheric meaning were then extrapolated from the overall text. The end result is a translated text, which aligns the imagable cores of the text to transform them into a narrative voice of photographic images, created with intersemiotic translation evidence: from the literary text to the visual text. The photographic images redefine the atmosphere in a synchronic time, between 1960 and 2020, and are made with rhetorical emphasis and selected for atmospheric coherence with the narration of Ortese (1998).²

The design of the atmospheres clearly transcends tourist suggestions and communicative stereotypes and moves towards new and inclusive points of view, considering that every place offers itself to perception and has aesthetic connotations useful for understanding memories of identity and otherness. Everyone «is constantly in a perceptive situation that decisively shapes their relationship with the world. Perceptions are, in fact, primarily traces of bodily presence, i.e. traces of a certain atmosphere» (Gorgone 2018).

We therefore conclude by recalling that for years the tourism industry has assumed an economic perspective oriented towards the experiential use of places (Martelloni 2007). Consequently, communication that enhances cultural and landscape assets has accepted this request for experience, highlighting, depending on the local characteristics to be promoted, *aesthetic*, *escapist*, *entertainment* or *educational* aspects, defined in the literature as «realms of experience» (Pine and Gilmore 2011). Among the experiential aspects most used and represented in tourist narratives, the aes-

² Link to the atmospheric representation taken from Anna Maria Ortese's book *Silenzio a Milano* (1998): “The design of the atmospheres and the dimensions of the narration”: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05ewveKNWA8&feature=youtu.be>>, online on 31 December 2023.

thetic dimension is also the one that actually allows for a more evocative and memorable experience. The aesthetic experience is all-encompassing, like an immersion, as we have seen: one is involved as a spectator and presence is important for the effect to be achieved (Pine and Gilmore 2011: 53). The aesthetic experience is therefore achieved by immersing oneself in the atmosphere of the places. The two terms – experience and immersion – both come from the interaction between body perception and space; moreover, experience is a specific quality of immersion (D’Orazio 2003). Even the analysis of tourists’ behaviour and their participatory response suggest that they are requests for an immersive experience rather than for knowledge (Ortoleva 2009: 97).

This analysis considers the communication design of the areas capable of a different, inclusive communication, which proceeds by narration of micro-identities and contrasts and not by identity stereotypes. An elective tool is the set of atmospheres as points of view and their representation; so as to restore a visual vocabulary of atmospheric otherness as “memorable” points of view.

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