



Towards  
a New Agenda  
for Design  
in the  
Mediterranean  
Region



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# EDITORIAL #16

# Towards a New Agenda for Design in the Mediterranean Region

Marinella Ferrara and Chiara Lecce

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The Mediterranean scenario does not stop to attract our interest and attention. We believe it is essential today to generate a convergence of actions that promotes creativity and innovation in this region, looking at the future of youth, by breaking the barriers of differences and misunderstandings between the various national realities and making the most of the difference in understanding the other.

PAD #16 issue deals with the design research and practices for the Mediterranean region, according to the vision of young creative innovators, in line with the previous #14 and #15 issues. It closes the trilogy of these last three issues to launch a new way of looking at the Mediterranean challenges.

We decided to shed light on the potential of the new globalized generation who wishes to take control of their future. It is by supporting the innovation capacity of youth that we will be able to advance the actual Mediterranean reality and open new perspectives on the future.

Whit this issue we give voice to PhD and researchers from the Mediterranean areas. They have faced a variety of problems that afflict these areas, to give new future perspectives each one with unique culture, personality, and means. They propose different design approaches, methodologies, and strategies to take advantage of the unique potentials of the Mediterranean communities, related mainly to the human capital, cultural identity, and creative resources. Creativity is the enabling forces for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to build a “territorial capital”, specific to increase opportunities for social innovation. Creativity is the way to forwards

new development models in the Mediterranean as a whole, in line with the EU 2020.

Reported researches mainly deal with the identification and recognition of the cultural and historical resources of each territory and its adoption as distinctive elements in the pursuit of new activities, with the double purpose of preserving the heritage and taking advantage of it.

The design applied to the development of cultural and creative resources can make a significant contribution not only at a social and cultural level but also at an economic level, becoming of general knowledge. One of the reasons that make cultural and creative practices so unique, as well as industries, is that they rely on unlimited resources: creativity and tradition, on which we can organize a sustainable economic development.

Reopening the dialogue with the cultures and ecologies of places, taking into consideration the unawareness of the economic reality, the continuous loss of territorial skills, and trying to insert into the reality new logics and ways of conceiving behaviours, ecologies and human needs, means to work for social and entrepreneurial innovation, knowing how to discern globalization trends with a view focused on the sustainable development of each territory.

The first section titled *Design for Social and Entrepreneurial Innovation* collects four contributes in which design has been declined into four corresponding different approaches/disciplines and immersed within the Mediterranean basin and its relative socio-economic contexts and complexities.

Design for All and Social Inclusion have been called into question by the article “Design for the Mediterranean Social Inclusion” by Emilio Rossi and Paola Barcarolo. Human-centred, inclusive-oriented and socially responsible design approaches have been here taken into account as concrete and relevant attitudes, considering the Mediterranean countries’ contemporary scenario with all its multiplicities and controversial contingencies (immigration at the first place).

Design for social innovation and teaching are at the core of Valentina Frosini’s contribute titled “*Mondiale!* Open-ended Game-tools to Stimulate Possibility Thinking for the Intercultural Education”, which presents practice-oriented research on intercultural education in terms of innovation in kindergartens. The article reports an exploratory case study conducted within the *Scuola per l’Infanzia I Gelsi* of Scandiano (Reggio Emilia, Italy) where design tools and the Reggio Emilia pedagogic method have been applied to generate intercultural and interdisciplinary education games for small children.

“Bio-inspired Design System for the Egyptian Market: a Short-term Project Case Study” by Nariman G. Lotfi and Dina Bahgat explores the fascinating field of the biomimicry-oriented design. Nature became the first source of inspiration and information in the area of Egyptian Product Design to create innovative, efficient, and sustainable solutions. Authors report interviews with local companies and designers in Egypt as well as a case study of short-term product development projects, which research outcomes led to the application of a Bio-inspired design system and method. According to



this, develop products is a matter of manufacturing locally and cost-efficiently with the consideration of user needs.

Jomana G. Attia investigates the struggles faced by Design Entrepreneurs in Cairo with her contribute “Design Entrepreneurs’ Challenges in Cairo’s Ecosystem”. The article focuses on communication problems between the entrepreneurs, the designers, and manufacturers in a start-up among the city of Cairo entrepreneurial ecosystem. The research, primarily intended as a sort of guide for Cairo’s design entrepreneurs, reveals the problems faced within the start-up and the ecosystem, as well as challenges, emerged in terms of dealing with designers and makers in the product development phases.

*Connecting Design and Culture of Territories* is the title of the second section of this issue which ascribes four articles that equally experience the relationship between the heritage of local cultures and design practices.

“Mediterranean Critical Regionalism. A Methodological Concept Linked to the Southern Space Designs of Post-War II” is the contribute by Sara Coscarelli Comas who establishes a historical connection, during the Post War II period, among Milanese Modern Architecture and the Spanish Group R, founded by the architect Josep Antoni Coderch. Critical regionalism seems to be the common ground of both architectonic visions that took their traditional vernacular traditions as a model, reinterpreting them through the progressive criteria of the architectural modernity and avoiding a mere aseptic application of the International Style.

Moving from Barcelona to the Egyptian territory, Ahmed Wahby and Mona A. Marie write “Fatimid Secular Architecture: a Visual Reconstruction”, a singular contribute dedicated to heritage of the ancient and influent dynasty of the Fatimids. The article reports the work of reconstruction of the Fatimid secular architecture through historical textual narratives in books and traveller testimonials and descriptions, then reported as a series of illustrations to be used as backgrounds in printed material, or studio setups for media purposes.

At the turn of anthropological studies and contemporary design eco-sensibilities lies the contribute by Bilge Merve Aktas titled “Vernacular Design Examples to Study Climate’s Role on Design Decisions: an Example of Nomadic Yörüks in the Turkish Mediterranean”. The research presents vernacular design examples to investigate the relationship between design and climate through the study of the habits of the Turkish nomadic clan of the Yörüks, whose living habits have been here taken into account as an example to analyze how climate, mobile lifestyle and accessible materials actively affect their design decisions.

The closing paper of the section titled “Design and Culture of the Territory: *Ecomuseo del Grano e del Pane* in the Salemi Museum System”, by Serena Del Puglia, Laura Galluzzo, and Viviana Trapani, brings us in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Italian region of Sicily. Design for territories is at the core of this contribution that reports the case of an Ecomuseum made possible thanks to the interconnection between

territorial actors and a multidisciplinary design process, gathering experiences and activities under a common relational discipline.

PAD #16 ends with the images of the project “Giochi di Strada” by the students of ABADIR, Academia of Visual Art and Design in Catania. The photos by Maddalena Migliore record the working in progress and the results of the design workshop made in collaboration with G124 and tutored by Giorgio Laboratore. Aim of the project was to design a new pedestrian path to be realized with a local crowdfunding operation. The result are fifteen playgrounds created on the walkway that revisit traditional games and invent new ones triggering a virtuous appropriation and regeneration process of the outskirts, starting from the children living nearby.

We hope this trilogy of PAD #14, #15 and #16, with a look towards the future, will promote and spread a new agenda to improve Mediterranean sustainable progress.



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