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**DESIGN VALUES  
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**PAD**

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**PROJECT**

# Design Perspectives

## Placebeing on an Island in the Mediterranean

Spyros Bofylatos, Helen Charoupia, Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou  
& Paris Xintarianos-Tsiropinas

University of the Aegean

### Keywords

Placebeing, Place-Making, Tacit Knowledge, Community, Introspection.

### Abstract

This paper probes the implicit dimension of the experiences of four design researchers living on an island of the Mediterranean. Through introspective methods, their points of view begin to uncover areas of convergence and divergence pivoting on themes of culture, community, and tacit knowledge. We aim to explore how the *topos* informs design and how it is shaped in turn.

Doing research on the island of Syros, we shared our perspectives as we navigate the associations among the means of artistic expression, networks of diffuse creativity, history and heritage, social relations and limitations of our own practice struggling to find words to describe them. To achieve this we engaged in textual, reflective introspection of our research, we discussed each other's texts and identified the key themes that were clustered. We posit that this reflection of our work will enable us to act as a feedback loop for both our practice as well as our daily life. In addition, we hope to engage in story-sharing with other embedded practitioners in order to discursively build a common language of *placebeing* in the Mediterranean and beyond.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we will explore how an embodied and experiential sense of place; what we call placebeing, connects the practice of four designers. All the authors are early career researchers, designers, activists working and living in a remote corner of the east Mediterranean. Through our work and everyday life, we holistically embody this elusive specter that we are yet unable to put into words. An island, a discreet landmass surrounded by the sea - the South Aegean in our case, is a unique place to live. There is a mystery to being an islander known only to those who live an insular lifestyle.

We hope to better understand how design works with the *topos*, what the *topos* is and how the process of negotiating it works in relation to artistic, social, and applied research as well as the creation of sustainable lifestyles. The research hypothesis here is that the way we conduct research on an island is shaped by the island, parts of this influence are tacit and as such necessitate the adoption of introspective methods to grasp. To understand this, we separately wrote about how we feel the *topos* influences our work, also we selected a photo that embodies the feeling of the text. Having these texts, we collectively critiqued them in an attempt to delve deeper and confront the tacit dimension of place in our research.

The central themes in each text were highlighted to understand the type of framing each of us adopts to talk about place-research relations. We adopted a first-person perspective for the

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1 Spyros Bofylatos is responsible for the paragraph 2; Paris Xintarianos-Tsiropinas for the 3rd; Helen Charoupia for the 4th and Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou for the 5th. The introductory paragraph and conclusions, were jointly written by the four authors.

texts that present our thoughts, feelings and ideas, and a third person perspective when discussing in the context of scholarship and academic research. This enables the reader to easily differentiate between our view and the literature.

Additionally, this juxtaposition of the two aims to underline our reflexive approach (Ripamonti et al. 2015) in critiquing contemporary positions on the matter place-center creative production. Critiquing Heidegger, Malpas (2012) argues that “philosophy begins in wonder and begins in place and the experience of place. The place of wonder, of philosophy, of questioning, is the very topos of thinking”. To become a place (*topos*), space acquires values, such as character and identity filled with humanized forms, functions, aspirations, feelings, and meanings. To understand a place, one can reflect on the social and cultural dimensions of its built environment. How can the people of Syros, a *topos* settled more than seven thousand years ago, still create a novel dimension of culture? Through participatory action research (Bilandzic & Venable 2011; Fassi et al., 2013), digital applications, and community storytelling, we explore how the sense of a place can be reinforced by acknowledging its heritage in a dynamic way. Through this line of thought, the idea of being in a place, place-being emerged. This notion points to the holistic experience of an embedded practice that shapes and is shaped by a place. This cultural constellation mirrors the nodes of an archipelago of creative communities. Pivoting on notions of co-design with locals, while honoring nature’s limits we explore the connection between the natural environment and making. Engaging in conversation with the inhabitants of the island we witness the osmosis of indigenous cultural practices with initiatives spurring within the presence of a multidisciplinary University.



This beacon of alternative values acts as a facilitator of the diffuse design capacities of the society surrounding it.

## 2. The Mystery of the *topos*

In the context of religious practices, a mystery is something like a one-way mirror. Those who participate in the mystery know what it entails, while for those on the outside it is a non-sensical thing. As most of the planet's population becomes more and more urbanised, the places we inhabit become less personal, larger and co-experienced by millions of souls. The notion of *topos*, the tacit essence of a place, cannot exist within a metropolis in the same way it does in a remote place. As cities grew they ate up all of the surrounding villages in a cultural grinder. Cities like London, New York, Shanghai are city states with their own culture, style and mysteries, they can become nonplaces without any kind of specific essence of place.

My research in the past decade has been centered around tacit knowledge in relation to Making and Design. In a nutshell I am trying to understand and communicate what this indescribable thing does, how it's used, and whether it is a fundamental part of human existence. Michael Polanyi introduced the tacit dimension in 1966, describing it in the sense "that we know more than we can tell". This refers to ways of knowing that grow through experience and craft but are personal and out of reach of explication or analysis. His argument is that the explicit parts of such knowledge are the tip of the iceberg.

Tacit knowledge lacks specification and articulation (Polanyi, 1966). According to Ingold (2015) tacit knowledge is a living embodied thing that turns lifeless and inert when pinned down and explained. What I found to work, both in my own personal re-

search projects and through my readings in the same field, is that it's more effective to talk, to reflect and to engage in introspective practices about experiences informed and shaped by tacit knowledge. The topos is a shared experience, and introspection combined with autoethnographic practices is a way for experience driven design research (Xue & Desmet, 2019) to flourish.

The essence of a place can be dismantled into its constituent parts, but as anything that is complex it cannot be put back together. Something gets lost during the butchering into bits, and that's my main motivation for doing this, for trying to reflect on what the *topos* is or how it changes, shapes and engages in a dialogue with the people who experience it. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors to this (Jung & Walker, 2018) but there is something more, something personal and elusive, something that demands that you engage in an authentic experience with the topos, to witness it, to be part of that holon.

The fact that Syros is an island makes it easier to differentiate it from other localities. Insular communities, be it on islands or mountains, such as Zomia (Scott, 2009), are fighting to put distance between themselves and the states that wished to engulf them. Living on an island is synonymous to bounded freedom, to collaboration, to solidarity. In addition, the beautiful experiment that is the Department of Product and Systems Design added a novel, young tribe to the quiet aging population of Syros. The creative cell that grew on the island has challenged the dusty envelope of tradition that kept everything in check and created a new colorful disruption full of unrest. For Syros, a place in flux since it was inhabited in 5.000BC this is an additional layer of transcultural capital and a new tension between the different stakeholders.

I believe that the thing that helps is scale. The island is part of a holon called Cyclades which is part of a larger archipelago of the Aegean and so on. The opportunity to experience all the layers of human life in an explicit, unescapable way is what makes this a great place to do research. There are dimensions of this Mediterranean topos that are shared throughout mare nostrum yet some peculiarities unique to Syros. One is the constant demographic change with new refugees, expats and migrants increasing the plurality with each generation. Another constant is respect, any who come hoping to engage in cultural imperialism will be met with stiff resistance while those who acknowledge and work with the people of the island will be met with open arms (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Daybreak at an all-night student party at the Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering. All rights: Sotiris Patronis, Xronis Potidis and Fani Panagopoulou.

### 3. Cultural production within the topos

In this age of globalized information, universal connection and the implementation of a common lifestyle - a pattern of behavior, work and entertainment for most of the humankind, the small islandic place - *topos*' offers a different way of life (*tropos*). In an area surrounded by the sea, the rhythms and requirements of everyday life differ from those of a large city or a capital, even if Syros is called the capital of the Cyclades. On this island, the farthest distance does not exceed 20 km. The tallest building has no more than four floors. The most unknown person is an acquaintance of a friend.

Islanders have at least one thing in common with each other, but also with the other islanders of Greece: the sea is everywhere around them. On most of the islands of the Greek archipelago, the sea is a daily spectacle acting as the frame of everyday life. But is this perpetually moving liquid element the only substance that characterizes these limited spatial territories as a special place to live?

For some of them, no. While some of the Aegean islands present a social structure and cohesion similar to that of the villages - small population, limited education and work options, deep connection to concepts such as tradition, family and religion - others, such as Syros, could be characterized, even today, as independent city-states (*poli-kratos*). In archeology the term is used as a reference to any social and political group which is composed of a major urban center and its region, which has achieved a high degree of independence and a clear cultural identity. "city-state" (Darvil, 2009).

Obviously, this term does not give a literal meaning to the term independence. The term cultural identity, on the other hand, characterizes and differentiates the islands from each other, to the extent that nowadays, the visitor or the future resident of an island chooses a more frantic, glamorous and fun way of life by going to Mykonos, one closer to nature, with a strong religious and artistic spirit like the one presented by Tinos, or one with more intense urban elements and more options in work and entertainment all year long, such as Syros.

The cultural heritage is part of the daily life of the people of Syros. Even a simple stroll in Hermoupolis brings a person into juxtaposition with art and architecture, reminding them of their debt to conserve and restore the environment around them like a gardener adding to the flourishing ecosystem more than was taken. And indeed, there are many who have taken the responsibility to record, preserve and add to the cultural capital. This fact that explains the existence of numerous festivals e.g., Stray Art Festival, International Rebetiko Festival and more<sup>2</sup> events that strengthen this identity and bring people together.

Some of these people choose Syros as a permanent residence from a young age and earn their salary living away from the big urban centers at a time when work and physical presence are no longer interconnected. But what they gain most is the quality of life offered by the environment. Nature, the sea, the short distances, the gaze into other people's eyes, are conditions and springboards for creativity. Whether it is a mural, a theatrical

play, a festival or a research process, everything is created by including a piece of the energy of this environment - this is what makes them stand out from the mass and the prefabricated. For an artist-designer like me, what life on a small island ultimately offers is the journey to the inner self. This journey, in addition to inspiration and creation, makes me understand my place in the world, humanity's granular scale in relation to the vast universe. Realizing that you are not unique is liberating. Life in Syros rewards me with the importance of scale. After all, all human actions, from a research process to a festival and from a play to a painting, are nothing more than stories. Even Design is storytelling (Lupton, 2017). Syros tells us how we will narrate it. In conclusion, place (*topos*) creates the way (*tropos*) (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** A small portion of the murals and artworks created at the Athletic Centre Dimitrios Vikelas of Syros during the Stray Art Festival 2018 All rights: Tatiana Kasimati.

## 4. Emergent Conversations between People and Place

Contributing to this patchwork of reflective introspection, my perspective arrives from a place of gradual immersion to a rhythm, a climate, a culture, and a way of being in place, in Syros. The way I see it, this island invites its inhabitants to make a home of it. Having grown up in a city like Athens, that never sleeps and rushes through you in the form of loud cars, busy people and close to zero community relations, finding myself in this place was intriguing to say the least. For the first few years, the entropy generated by 19 years under the shadows of tall apartment buildings urged me to return periodically to smell the exhaust fumes and feel like a stranger. Admittedly, this is not the experience everyone has in a place like Athens, and it was slowly revealed to me that people are what a place is made of - rather than simply the elements of its architecture or the weather forecast. Come to think of it, a place is not made just of people, either, but the experiences that are co-created with them, the place and - admittedly - me, you, us.

And so, in the embrace of the sea and a newfound community created by the Department of Product and Systems Design & Engineering, my visits to the big city got shorter. Settling into a new scale of interconnectedness, the university was the first node from which I tried to make sense of this place. The courses that I took, especially in my last years of study, opened new ways of knowing, relating and being with(in) the world. By understanding the role of design as that of a mediator of our realities, a myriad of underexplored facets of this discipline unfolded before me. Through coming in contact

with a wide array of subjects, methods, techniques, schools of thought and praxis, a sense of curious exploration started to blossom within me. An exploration that would question how design could be enacted with the place, its people and its environment, embracing its complexity, systemically and collaboratively creating with(in) it.

Having this in mind, I started noticing the multitude of initiatives that had already taken root on the island of Syros, realizing the potential of this small node of creativity in the midst of the Aegean archipelago. A tight knit network of interpersonal bonds between the peoples of the island, indigenous or not, has been woven through the relationships that exist between families, university groups, communities or action-based initiatives. These entanglements generate a continuous conversation between the people, the space they live in and the place they want to manifest for themselves. From this dialogue creative communities (Meroni, 2007) are emerging, forming grassroots actions through which participation, organisational autonomy and co-design are encouraged, without necessarily being named as such. From a place of deep knowing about the island, its ebbs, and flows - of winter streams or summer tourists, the inhabitants have cultivated an understanding that guides designed initiatives into bloom.

Some examples of relational services (Cipolla & Manzini, 2009), created in the midst of the community of the island include the actions of Apano Meria, a social cooperative enterprise (Apano Meria, 2020). Guided by local and expert knowledge, this initiative aims to cultivate a praxis of sustainment



(Fry, 2004) for the primitive lands of the island, all the while encouraging better communication of the needs of the *topos* to its people. In an effort to find the way, or the *tropos*, with which we can relate to the environment and its inhabitants, an island in the Mediterranean such as Syros could -through the tangible and intangible stories that it embodies- provide the rhythm and the know-how with which we could manifest creative, just and sustainable futures.

All in all, in a world in the midst of several crises, systemic and collaborative design seems like the ideal kaleidoscopic lens through which humanity can engage in pluriversal (Escobar, 2018) problem framing. Discovering the multiple perspectives through which other entities experience this world, might help us tap into a collective wisdom that will guide us, more steadily, forward (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Walking through Apano Meria with the locals: discussing, exploring, understanding, and connecting with people and place. All rights Authors.

## 5. Embeddedness in Cultural Placebeing

My perspective stems from the research on the space-place relationship and how people of a historic city can collectively create a digital dimension of cultural capital by acknowledging and preserving their architectural heritage. This investigation became more focused when I moved to Syros, after a 2-year training on digital cultural heritage's practical implications and doing research abroad, mainly Cyprus and central Europe. Doing research on the island and travelling around eastern Mediterranean, unraveled a more experiential way to reflect on my observations, especially the differentiation between space and place.

Space is a hypothetical condition. It becomes identifiable the moment human presence and activity concretize it. Then space has become a place (Stefanou & Stefanou 1999). Buildings constitute a key element of understanding a place because they reflect the expression of society (social) and the people (cultural) who made them. Therefore, a place's identity is not only integrated into built space but also in cultural practice. The community of concern acts upon the built heritage of its city and transforms it. At the same time, it keeps up with these transformations and the stories associated with them, thus making a collective activity. Could it be like a network, forming communal roots and identity (Han et al., 2014), thus representing a city's cultural heritage?

Inspired by my team's (HERMeS, 2019) vision and observing most of Hermoupolis' built heritage slowly declining, we decided to engage with the citizens through Participatory Action

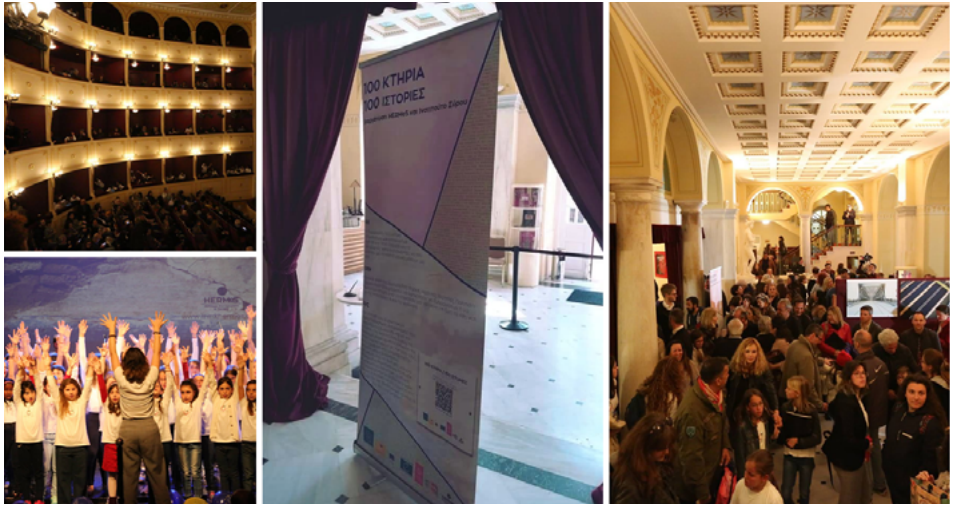
Design Research (Bilandzic and Venable 2011; Fassi et al., 2013) Building upon an existing digital heritage management and preservation system (Chatzigrigoriou & Mavrikas, 2013) for Hermoupolis' endangered buildings, we aimed to integrate the stories of those buildings into the system. We assumed that citizens could provide this qualitative dimension that the system was lacking. I was surprised by their response to our call (Figure 4). Turns out that story-sharing affected all 'kinds' of citizens, since everybody has a story to tell about a building or how they relate to it. Even citizens that did not tell a story came to the project's ceremony. It appears that this type of fragile heritage communicating, primarily raised among citizens a feeling of belongingness, rather than awareness, whereas in this case buildings became a mere communication medium. The outcome of this project was the creation of a network containing 100 buildings and their stories (*100 buildings/ 100 stories*) open to further additions and the action's continuation via the establishment of a similar annual ceremony welcoming the participation of all citizens.

Drawing on the above, our research motivation became even more profound. We now seek to digitally bridge the communication gap between the tangible (built) and intangible (stories) heritage of a place beyond the borders of Syros. Our current space is Aegean.

In my research travels to three Aegean settlements with globally recognized intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO Know How of cultivating mastic on the island of Chios, 2014; UNESCO Mediterranean diet, 2013; UNESCO Tinian Marble

Craftsmanship 2015), I was faced with another *sense of place*. I observed that there is another way to consider cumulative involvement and its footprint on space. The settlements of Pyrgos (Tinos), Agia Paraskevi (Lesvos), and the mastic village of Olympoi (Chios) are places; spaces that are already occupied and nothing could displace them. Only entropy and decay could affect their built, tangible environment. During the travels, I endeavored to reveal the intangible manifestations of the built surroundings and conceptually interpret them to the rest of the design team (Vosinakis et al. 2020; Chatzigrigoriou et al. 2021). My travels lasted about ten days at each settlement. It took me days to settle and feel I was part of these places; I was being *placed* in the specific space (placement). Returning to Syros and Hermoupolis, I wondered if this city's cultural heritage has determined the relationship between place and people as in these three settlements. It seems that Hermoupolis is a differently determined place which forced me to think about why I chose to permanently settle there. Therefore, my reflection on the idea of placement raised the question “how much of my, your, our placement in the specific space can affect or already affects the place, and how much the place can influence or already influences our ‘being’ in this space?”

The last quotes stem from a Heideggerian observation on the space-place-human relationship. Concerning Heidegger's concepts on the topology of being, J. Malpas (2008) demonstrates how the notion of “emplacement” became the pivotal answer for Heidegger: how anything can exist and become what it is, including human beings. For Heidegger (J. Malpas, 2008), the concepts of “being” and “place” are unseparated.



**Figure 4.** Celebrating the story-sharing initiative, ‘100 buildings / 100 stories’, at the local historic theatre of Apollon, Hermoupolis. All rights Authors.

In our research approach, we extend Heidegger’s concept of placebeing and search for digital interactions among citizens and buildings highlighting the notions of place- *belonging*, *acting*, and *making*, thus focusing on the cultural expressions. Through such an approach one can suggest the *thinking through the place* which, eventually, indicates a way (*tropos*) (Fig. 4).

## 6. Conclusions

We set out to author this paper aiming to better understand and illustrate the tacit dimensions of the *topos* as they become entangled with our research in an embedded Mediterranean setting. Each one has a different level of experience with introspective methods and that was perhaps the biggest challenge. Breaking the rules of scientific convention and academic writing and engaging in this type of writing feels wrong at times.

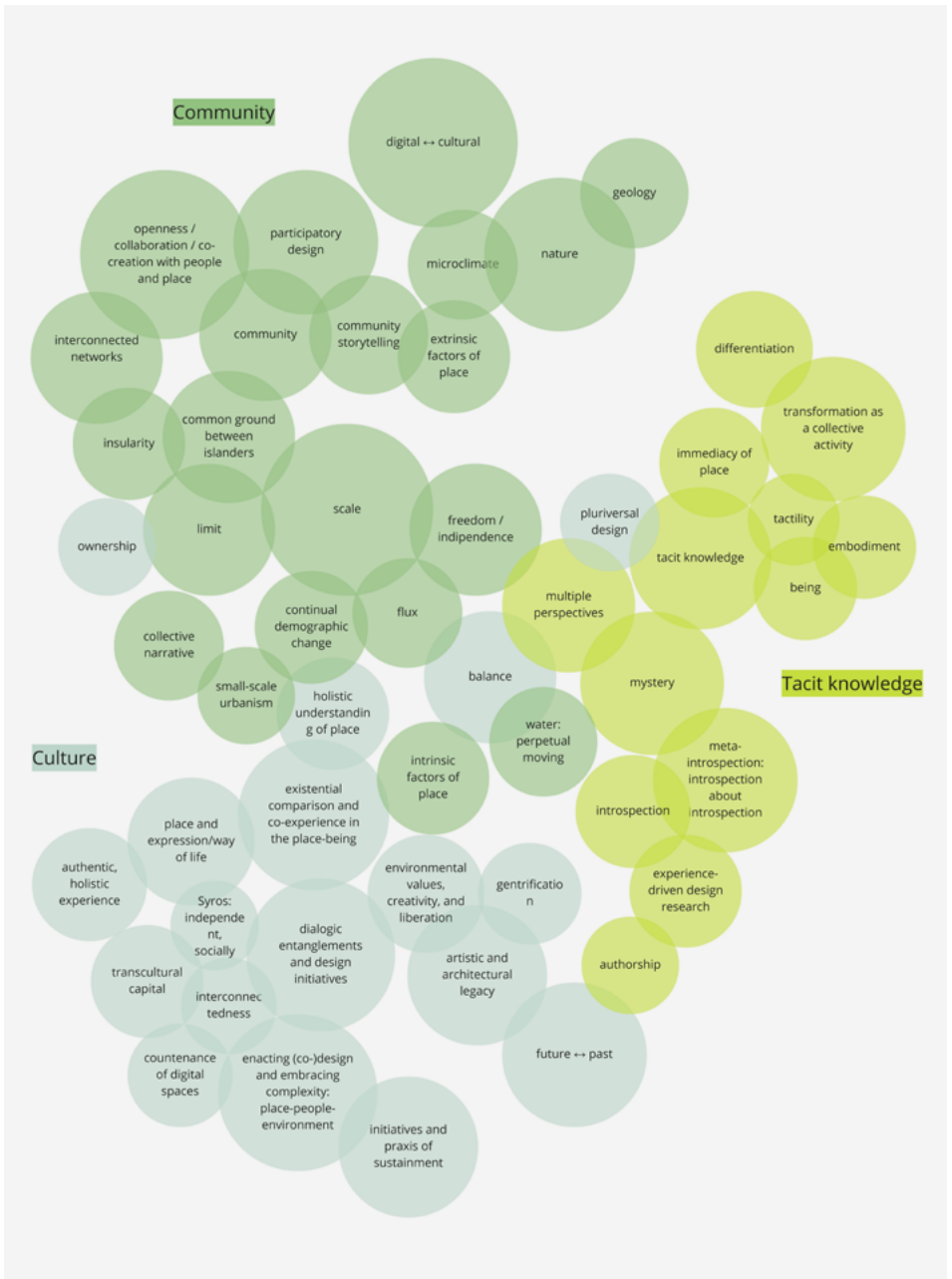


Figure 5. Authors, Affinity Diagram – Connecting the dimensions of placebeing. All rights Authors.

Undertaking this process as a collective made it more manageable as we pushed each other to elaborate more what each text was about... The texts overlap in some central notions pointing to some common characteristics of our tacit understanding of topos.

To better understand the common ground, we each did a rough theme analysis (King, 2004) in each other's texts. We created an affinity diagram in an online platform and mapped the connections and overlap between our perspectives (Fig. 5).

This map was illustrated as a *xerolithia*; a drystone wall found throughout the Mediterranean that has been added in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage catalogue in 2018 (UNESCO Art of dry-stone walling, knowledge, and techniques, 2018). The *art of xerolithia* is termed to describe a construction made by stones without any binder. It involves the placement of heterogeneous pieces of rock: a transmission of knowledge passed from one generation to another and rooted in the feeling of belonging to a community, be it the family or the rural community of a place. It represents another influence on our way of thinking and conducting research shaped by the island. As the craftspeople of *xerolithia* do, we collectively placed the pivoting notions stemming from our texts and created a stronger whole without beating the pieces to place (Fig. 6).

The affinity diagram's sequence reflects our approach to connecting the dimensions of placebeing considered by each. We have passed from the unknown to the uncertain regarding the common threads in our research.



**Figure 6.** Authors, Xerolithia Theme Representation – Creating a stronger whole by combining our contributions All rights Authors.

Some emergent ideas that act as undercurrents connecting our experience and practice include the notion of temporality of space and place. Degrowth (Giacomo D’alisa et al, 2015) calls for decentralization, living on a scale that allows the place to exist. There is a rhythmical flow to the place that is connected to the climate, the mitigations of humans and non-humans and all aspects of it. The wet cold of winter brings us closer to protect us while the hostile August sun pulverises those who steer away from the embrace of the sea. Another dimension is how the Networks evolve to Nets, the common nodes in the constellation of activists, artists and scholars capture the minds of any adventurous souls that happen to pass through the Cycladic Archipelago. Finally, we extend an invitation to our readers to come and experience and engage in a dialogue on placebeing in the Mediterranean, this type of work is only the beginning.



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IV

# BIOGRAPHIES

**Roberta Angari**

She is an Italian graphic designer. In 2015 she graduated in Design for Innovation at University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”. In 2020 she obtained a Ph.D. degree in Architecture, City and Design - Design Sciences at University IUAV of Venice with the dissertation “Kono - Analysis and design of a digital archive of visual communication”. Main focus of her line of research are data visualization, digital design and digital archive - knowledge acquired during her academic path. Since may 2020 she has a research grant entitled “Scientific Design for Medical Research”, with tutor Carla Langella, at the University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” - Department of Architecture and Industrial Design (DADI). At the same Department, she is Teacher Assistant of the course “Visual identity for Cultural Landscapes” held by Daniela Piscitelli.  
[roberta.angari@unicampania.it](mailto:roberta.angari@unicampania.it)

**Margherita Ascari**

PhD Student in Architecture and Design Cultures at the University of Bologna. She graduated at the University of Bologna in Product Design in 2018 and obtained a master’s degree in Service Design at the University of Bologna in 2020, discussing a thesis about the role of data visualization in participatory processes and in the communication of urban transformations. Her main research topics are related to the use of data visualization as a tool for the democratization of the processes of co-production of services for the city.  
[margherita.ascari2@unibo.it](mailto:margherita.ascari2@unibo.it)

**Spyros Bofylatos**

He holds a doctorate in theory of Design from the Department of Products and System Design Engineering of the University of the Aegean. His research sprawls around Design for sustainability, craft, service design and social innovation. His work is based on creating meaningful dialogue between the theoretical framework and the sociotechnical propositional artifacts that embody different questions in a Research through Design approach. Applying introspective and auto-ethnographic methods to this process he aims to challenge the dominant modernist epistemology of design. At the very core of this process lies the notion that we live in transitional times and fostering the discourse that leads to networks of artifacts that embody alternative systems of values is necessary to move away from today’s unsustainable society.  
[bofy@aegean.gr](mailto:bofy@aegean.gr)

**Marco Bozzola**

Associate professor in design at the Department of Architecture and Design of Politecnico di Torino, where he teaches Concept Design and Design for Cultural Heritage at the bachelor degree in Design and Communication. His research fields are design for crafts and territory, design for cultural heritage and packaging design. Research areas that develop through the exploration of the relationships between local artisan production and design in the Piedmont Region and find applicative feedback in research activities and design actions.  
[marco.bozzola@polito.it](mailto:marco.bozzola@polito.it)

**Burcu Akdağ Çağlar**

PhD candidate in Design Studies in the Izmir University of Economics. She did her master’s in Middle East Technical University in the Biotechnology Department. She is a biochemist. She had her company about biomaterials and worked for three years as R&D in the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. She has been working in Izmir Institute of Technology as a lecturer for three years. After biotechnology and chemistry fields, she tries to shift her career into design. Her research interests are biodesign and biomaterials.  
[burcuakdag@iyte.edu.tr](mailto:burcuakdag@iyte.edu.tr)

**Irene Caputo**

Systemic designer particularly keen on relationships between cultures, and enhancement of territorial identities. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Department of Architecture and Design of Politecnico di Torino, with a research project on the improvement of cultural heritage and cultural accessibility, with the aim of highlighting new approaches in defining the relationships between design, cultural heritage and communities.  
[irene.caputo@polito.it](mailto:irene.caputo@polito.it)

**Helen Charoupia**

She holds a degree in Product and Systems Design Engineering from the University of the Aegean, majoring in Service Design. Since 2020, she has been a PhD candidate in the Department, studying issues related to the emergence of sustainable futures through design.

Using participatory action research she aims to explore the ways in which tacit knowledge can emerge, be understood and leveraged to better design relational services for sustainable futures. This exploration will pivot on the ways of knowing that emerge from the process of design, craft and co-creation as well as on the indigenous practices at the local level. Her research aims to enable the emergence of a new design epistemology, based on concepts like post-humanism as well as on feminist and indigenous theoretical frameworks. This will be accomplished with small groups of people, within which co-creation will occur, following processes of participatory design.

[hcharoupia@aegean.gr](mailto:hcharoupia@aegean.gr)

**Sara Coscarelli**

PHD Fellow Professor at EINA, Centre Universitari de Disseny i Art de Barcelona, at the UAB, since 2011. She is doctorate in Humanities (2023), at UPF, and Graduate in Interior Design (2004) at EINA. She combines teaching in Space Design Bachelor at EINA with and researching. She coordinates the Master in Space Design and also she has her own studio of space design Sara Coscarelli Creación de Espacios (2008). Her researches are related with Interior Domestic in the Mediterranean context. She is developing consequences of the Mediterranean Critical Regionalism concept. She has published in many international conference. Moreover, she is an Interior Designer with own studio.

[scoscarelli@eina.cat](mailto:scoscarelli@eina.cat)

**Antonio de Feo**

PhD student in Design Science at Università Iuav di Venezia, designer and photographer. He investigates how the culture of the project can become a tool for reading and social innovation. After graduating in Industrial Design at the Polytechnic University of Bari with a thesis that combines territory, handicraft, design and industry, patented by the Polytechnic, he moves to Venice where he continues his studies at the Iuav University, graduating in product and visual design with a thesis on photography for design. In September 2020 he becomes a research fellow at the Iuav of Venice.

In his research he intends to analyze representational and transformative technologies as tools to communicate and market a product or a service. In addition, he studies to understand how photography could become a means of analysis and study for design, becoming historical memory of ancient craft values and material knowledge.

[adefeo@iuav.it](mailto:adefeo@iuav.it)

**Claudia De Giorgi**

Architect and Full Professor of Design at Politecnico di Torino, she is a researcher in the field of the culture of materials for innovative design, technologies and production processes, investigating the sensory and sustainable dimension in a human-centred approach to design, which pays attention to people real needs: functional, relational and perceptive.

The work is carried out in close connection to the regional manufacturing sectors as part of a complex system of relationships which aims to disseminate innovation, develop new technological paradigms and new, more sustainable production scenarios. Scientific Director of MATto, innovative materials archive open to Piedmont SMEs, since 2018 she is Vice Rector for Quality, Welfare and Equal Opportunities at the Politecnico di Torino.

[claudia.degiorgi@polito.it](mailto:claudia.degiorgi@polito.it)

**Elena Formia**

Associate Professor in Design at the Department of Architecture of the Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, where she is Director of First Cycle Degree in Industrial Design and of the Second Cycle Degree in Advanced Design.

She is member of the Advanced Design Unit. Her main research topics are advanced design and future-focused processes, design education and the relationship between design sciences and humanistic knowledge.

She wrote articles both in international conferences and journals, such as "Strategic Design Research Journal", "Design and Culture", "Journal of Design History", "MD Journal", "DIID. Disegno Industriale Industrial Design", "The Design Journal".

[elena.formia@unibo.it](mailto:elena.formia@unibo.it)

**Claudio Gambardella**

Architect and designer, Full Professor of Industrial Design at the Architecture and Industrial Design Department of Campania University "Luigi Vanvitelli". He is also affiliate professor (invited) at the School of Design of East China Normal University in Shanghai, the Faculty of Architecture and Design of Özyeğin University in Istanbul and the Department of Architecture of Istanbul Gelişim University.

One of his main lines of research concerns the valorization of that design dialoguing with craftsmanship, strongly anchored to territories of the country, and capable of supporting the Made in Italy development, that is what he names "Handmade in Italy." About this, he is the national coordinator of the ADI Thematic Commission "Handmade in Italy," which he founded in 2017. Since 2020 he is Scientific Committee member of SYMBOLA Foundation for Italian Qualities.

[claudio.gambardella@unicampania.it](mailto:claudio.gambardella@unicampania.it)

**Valentina Gianfrate**

Researcher in Service Design and lecturer at the Advanced Design Master's Degree Course. Her fields of expertise are: advanced design approach to support urban transformations through multi-stakeholders collaboration, co-design of urban accessibility, design for preparedness.

She is involved in the development of International projects and in educational cross-city programs about design for responsible innovation.

[valentina.gianfrate@unibo.it](mailto:valentina.gianfrate@unibo.it)

**Aybeniz Gökmen**

Research assistant at Karabük University Industrial Design Department and also a Ph.D. student at Gazi University Industrial Design Department. Her research interests are focuses on Cultural Studies, Making Culture and Post-industrial Production. For the PhD research she is more focused on democratic design platforms on cultural interaction basis.

In her current work she and her co-worker argues the current socio-cultural transformation in Anatolian Dowry Culture in the context of reinvention of tradition.

[aybenizgokmen@karabuk.edu.tr](mailto:aybenizgokmen@karabuk.edu.tr)

**Necla İknur Sevinç Gökmen**

PhD candidate in Design Studies at Izmir University of Economics, İzmir, Turkey. She completed her undergraduate and graduate education in Industrial Design Program at Istanbul Technical University. Currently, she is teaching design courses at Istanbul Medipol University. Her research interests are circular design, craft, and design for social innovation.

[nisevinc@medipol.edu.tr](mailto:nisevinc@medipol.edu.tr)

**Gabriele Goretti**

Associate professor at Jiangnan University in Wuxi (China) where is leading the Brand Future UX Design lab and teaching Design management and Design Methodologies and Principles courses. Contract Professor at ESSCA Business School/ Shanghai where is teaching Design Innovation for Luxury Market.

From 2007 to 2017 lecturer fellow and then post-doc researcher at DIDA Department of University of Florence, where he led several joint research labs in between Academia and advanced craftsmanship SMES. Professor in Fashion Design and Product Design at undergraduate program in Design of University of Florence. PhD in Industrial design, Environment and History, his professional profile is focusing on relationships between design strategies and advanced manufacturing processes. Academic coordinator at Fashion Design department of IED-Istituto Europeo di Design in Florence from 2014 to 2018. From March 2018 to December 2019, Associate Researcher at Nanjing University/School of Art.

[8202001218@jiangnan.edu.cn](mailto:8202001218@jiangnan.edu.cn)

**Yasemin Kutlay**

She is an interior and spatial designer, a design researcher and PhD candidate. She studied Interior Architecture and Environmental Design at the Izmir University of Economics. Additionally, she carried out one of her internships in Chiba University, Japan together with Prof. Kaname Yanagisawa Lab. with a JASSO scholarship. After, she got her MSc. degree from Politecnico di Milano in Interior and Spatial Design where she worked as an intern design researcher at PoliMi Desis

Lab. Currently, she is living and working in İzmir and continuing her studies in neuroaesthetic interiors for wellbeing, and AI technology in design.

[yasemin.albayrak@ieu.edu.tr](mailto:yasemin.albayrak@ieu.edu.tr)

### **Carla Langella**

Architect, Associate Professor of Industrial Design at the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”.

She teaches Bio-innovation Design and Design for Scientific Visualization in the Master’s Degree Course Design for Innovation and Industrial Design Laboratory 3 in the Three-year Degree Course of Design and Communication. In the field of experimental design research, she investigates the opportunities to build hybrid paths that involve advanced scientific contributions in the design project to bring contemporary science closer to people’s lives.

Since 2006 she founded and coordinates the Hybrid Design Lab ([www.hybriddesignlab.org](http://www.hybriddesignlab.org)), the design laboratory dedicated to mutual relations between design and science with particular attention to the experimentation of biomimicry in design and the integration of designers in the development processes of new materials to which the specific Designer in lab project is dedicated.

[carla.langella@unicampania.it](mailto:carla.langella@unicampania.it)

### **Sonia Chikh M’hamed**

Associate Professor of Strategy and International Management at ESSCA School of Management in Shanghai. She is also in charge of the research coordination of Shanghai Campus. Prior to her current position, she worked at Renmin University of China as an Associate Professor in Management Control, where she has received the Teaching Excellence Award in 2016. Dr Chikh M’hamed obtained her PhD in Management Sciences from the University of Angers in 2012, an MBA in Audit & Financial Control and a degree of Master Research from the IAE Lyon and EM Lyon Business School.

Since 2009 Dr Chikh M’hamed has held several teaching positions in various universities and business schools in France, Italy and China and conducted consultancy in strategy and international business. Her areas of research focus on collective strategies, business models and innovation as well as sustainability, in particular in Europe and Asia. In 2020, she has received a fellowship on the European Green Deal of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin.

[sonia.chikh@essca.fr](mailto:sonia.chikh@essca.fr)

### **Iliaria Masullo**

Architect, freelancer, graduated from Sapienza University of Rome, in 2017, with a dissertation on architectural and landscape design. Worked at an architecture firm first, and then at an engineering firm.

Has collaborated on multiple research projects in the field of design, mostly books and exhibitions. Currently member of the editorial board of the annual magazine “Southern Identity”.

[ilaria.masullo@uniroma1.it](mailto:ilaria.masullo@uniroma1.it)

### **Lorela Mehmeti**

PhD Student in Architecture and Design Cultures at the University of Bologna. Her current work focuses on the analysis of scientific production and critical analyses of design cultures. Her experience on the field working with the civil society in the Balkan area gave her the chance to engage in the project development sector, namely grant-writing for projects and fundraising. These activities have paved her way towards the analysis of project design and new co-design methodologies for strategic inclusion, through culture and creativity as tools for increasing community resilience.

[lorela.mehmeti2@unibo.it](mailto:lorela.mehmeti2@unibo.it)

### **Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou**

She holds a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics (2012) from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and a master’s degree from the Department of Design Engineering of the University of the Aegean (2015).

She is currently doing her PhD at the same department (2018), focusing on UX evaluation methods in interactive systems related to cultural heritage. She is also a research fellow and member of the Heritage Management e-Society (HERMeS) NGO. She has been a Marie Curie Early Stage Researcher (2016) in Cyprus and Austria at an Initial Training Network (ITN) dedi-



cated to digital cultural heritage. The multidisciplinary of the field she engaged in, emerged numerous research interests covering areas from HCI, participatory and conceptual design, interaction design, and heritage management.

[v.nikolakopoulou@aegean.gr](mailto:v.nikolakopoulou@aegean.gr)

### **Gabriele Pontillo**

He is an Italian product designer. In 2015 he graduated in Design for Innovation at the University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”. In 2019 he obtained a Doctoral Research Fellowship in Environment, Design and Innovation at the University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”.

Main focus of his line of research are parametric design, medical design, and advanced manufacturing – knowledge acquired during his academic path. The Ph.D. course with industrial characterization has allowed him to carry out and consolidate his research activity, as well as at his university, also at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería y Diseño Industrial (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain) and a company from Campania, based in Gricignano di Aversa, to design a system of innovative orthopaedic devices through parametric design.

[gabriele.pontillo@unicampania.it](mailto:gabriele.pontillo@unicampania.it)

### **Laura Succini**

Architect with experience in strategic design for development of project that links territory, manufacturing and creativity. She is Phd student at University of Bologna, her main research topics are design and collaborative approach within territories and design for responsible innovation.

Since 2018 she is a member of the Advanced Design Unit, the design research group of the Department of Architecture – University of Bologna.

[laura.succini@unibo.it](mailto:laura.succini@unibo.it)

### **Yasmin Mosad Hashem Sherif**

She is an industrial designer, and in 2017 she awarded Bachelor’s degree in industrial design from the faculty of Applied Arts, Banha University – Egypt. After graduating university with highest honors, she worked at the same faculty as a Teaching Assistant in industrial design department.

Currently she is working on her Master’s degree with topic “Transition Design as an Approach to Products Design under Crises and Societal challenges” to take advantage of the transition design in the face of the changes produced by crises and societal challenges to completely reshape life patterns for creating a more sustainable desirable future for all.

[yasminsherif2021@gmail.com](mailto:yasminsherif2021@gmail.com)

### **Elena Vai**

PhD in Advanced Design, she is coordinator of the Research Centre for the Interaction with the Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Bologna. Since 1995 she has operated as event designer, curator, mediator and producer of cultural and editorial projects on the topic of Cultural and Creative Industries.

Since 2014 she teaches and works in the Advanced Design Unit of the University of Bologna.

[elena.vai@unibo.it](mailto:elena.vai@unibo.it)

### **Paris Xyntarianos-Tsiropinas**

PhD candidate in the Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering of the University of the Aegean. He has graduated from the undergraduate program of the same department (2013) and holds a master’s degree from the school ELISAVA - Barcelona School of Design and Engineering (2015), in the field of illustration and comics.

He is occupied with street art and mainly with large-scale murals. He’s worked individually and with his team, Really? Team, in various parts of Greece.

He also works as a designer, illustrator, street artist and musician. His interests include photography, production and direction of audiovisual works, writing and acting. His research interests revolve around Design, Art and Creation, focusing on the design processes that precede, are subject to and follow the creation of works of Street Art, and how they are qualitatively and quantitatively related to Design, in terms of productivity, quality, performance and user experience.

[parisxt@aegean.gr](mailto:parisxt@aegean.gr)

**Osama Youssef**

Currently he is professor of industrial design at the Faculty of Applied Arts, Helwan University. The academic history extends gradually, starting from a teaching assistant to a professor. During those periods, he taught at many public and private universities, which have departments of industrial design and product design. He published more than twenty research papers in refereed scientific journals and local and international conferences, supervised many master's and Ph.D. theses, and participated in the discussion and judgment committees for scientific theses. He received the award for the best master's thesis at Helwan University, as well as the medal of the Faculty of Applied Arts. Patent design for a white cane model for the blind. Held several workshops for designing and prototyping in addition to many participations in the field of industry, especially the manufacture of handmade models, as well as community service and volunteer work for people with special needs.

[drosamayousefm@gmail.com](mailto:drosamayousefm@gmail.com)

**Michele Zannoni**

Associate Professor of Industrial design. He is a member of the Advanced Design Unit at the University of Bologna – Department of Architecture. His publications include articles and books which explore the intersection of interaction processes and visual and product design.

His scientific research is concerned about digital and physical products and interaction design. In his professional activity, he collaborated on several projects of user interfaces and interactive systems.

[michele.zannoni@unibo.it](mailto:michele.zannoni@unibo.it)

**Fatma Nur Gökdeniz Zeynali**

Research assistant at Karabük University and PhD student at Gazi University Industrial Design Department. She has studied Industrial Design and before working as a Design Researcher she had some experience as Industrial Designer for the Automotive Sector. Her research interests are focuses on User Experience Design and Models for future concepts. For the PhD research she is more focused on Interaction Centered Models of User Experience on future products such as electric cars. In her current work she and her co-worker argues the current socio-cultural transformation in Anatolian Dowry Culture in the context of reinvention of tradition.

[fnurgokdeniz@karabuk.edu.tr](mailto:fnurgokdeniz@karabuk.edu.tr)



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