24

PAD

FUTURE

HERITAGES

IV. BIOGRAPHIES

004

EDITORIAL
#24

Future Heritages
Digital as New Doc-Humanity and In-Tangible Materiality

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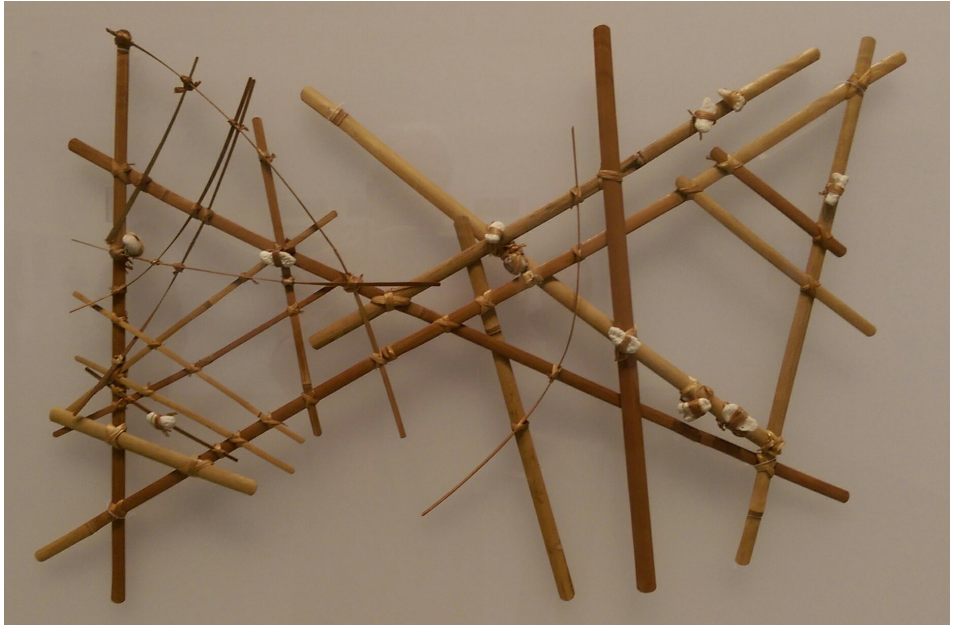
> If at the centre of the industrial revolution, made of materiality, was production, at the centre of the *documedia* revolution, made of memory, is consumption.[1]
> (Ferraris, 2021, p. VIII)

In this second issue devoted to memory and its relationship with the digital, we have chosen the image of an object, a Micronesian navigation chart.[2] It originates within a tradition of implicit and empirical knowledge of a territory made experiential and handed down through an actual artefact. Unlike an ancient *portulanus* (pilot book), the map is physical and tactile and does not realistically reproduce or represent the morphology of the territory but rather a model of it. However, like Western nautical cartographies, this orientation tool embeds different levels of knowledge of a territory, or rather, of a context within which it is necessary to orient oneself in order to interact. Oriented thanks to the stellar compass, they include quantitative and qualitative information on ocean currents, flows, winds and *betia* or time-varying environment-based seamarks.

From our point of view, it represents a different way of transmitting and sharing "data" (intended as information) and knowledge to whom can interpret them. At the same time, it emphasises the path necessary to obtain that knowledge.

1   Translation by the authors. The original text in Italian is: "Se al centro della rivoluzione industriale, fatta di materia, c'era la produzione, al centro della rivoluzione documediale, fatta di memoria, c'è il consumo."

2   The opening photo represents precisely a stick chart from the Marshall Islands, on display at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. From the collection of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Date not known. Photo by Jim Heaphy. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Islands_stick_chart.

A path built through a visual and tactile, material and immaterial, original code.

As mentioned in the previous monograph issue of PAD 23/2022, *Digital Memories* introduces two axes according to which it is possible to read the relationship between past and present and present and future. In this further exploration of the topic of *memories* mediated by technologies, the focus is on the connection between past and future, where the present is the mediation zone where to build bridges to cross this temporal gap.

The institutions traditionally devoted to the collection, preservation, curation and communication of Cultural Heritage, both material as well as intangible, such as Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAMs), has been joining and benefiting from the access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) since the very beginning of the "fourth revolution" (Floridi, 2014), i.e. the internet era. From the Paris-based Louvre to the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in the US, from the Italian Uffizi Galleries to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, cultural institutions have always used the digital, augmented, virtual space of the web to propagate their message, to offer different, richer, enhanced experiences to their visitors, to make documents and primary sources available to scholars and researchers, to democratise access to culture, history, art and science *in situ* and *onlife*. World Wide platforms – such as the Google Art & Culture project – social media, mobile applications and websites of small heritages are the entry doors to past heritage, human culture, and history.

Archives, on the other hand, are the main players in the process of digitisation and digitalisation of past documents, sources and artefacts to be then studied, preserved and transmitted to future generations as cultural and human heritages in a *virtual* form as an alternative, duplicate or substitute of the original ones. Fragments potentially dispersed, even if not almost lost, perishable, hidden to be preserved or otherwise forgotten, are *translated* in a new paradigm of existence to be further passed down, discovered again, and brought to new lives. Alternatively, vice versa, entire collections are progressively *remastered* through digital formats, devices and tools and reconfigured thank the opportunities – in terms of languages and interactions – offered by the technology revolutions in a planned and progressive process of transmission, transduction and migration, to complex communication ecosystems aimed to translate information into experience, communication into storytelling and implicit knowledge in accessible understanding.

Digitisation, considered as an opportunity to indefinitely preserve documents and artefacts otherwise ephemeral, perishable, fading or missed – surviving just through indirect sources – is facing a possible questioning phase (Ferraris, 2009) if not an actual crisis according to Vincent Cerf's statement referred to the morality of contemporary digital photographic heritage (Sample, 2015).

The concept of heritage itself is deeply connected, on the one hand, to the idea of the past, i.e. memory, and on the other hand, to the idea of unknown, foreseeable, possible, probable or desirable future experiences, which is still in a potential and developing dimension of human exploration/time.

According to Suddendorf, Redshaw and Bulley, authors of the book *The Invention of Tomorrow: A Natural History of Foresight* (2022), humankind is the only species, among all living creatures, able to figure out the idea of the future. Furthermore, the capability to imagine hypothetical situations, i.e. something not happening *hic et nunc* – is at the very basis of every possible innovation. Besides, it is also the common ground of the social interactions where people accept to give up something now, in favour of someone else or of the collectivity, to forgo the benefit of it in a subsequent time/situation because of being part of the same community.

At a neural level, recalling a memory and prefiguring a future are similar and based on the capacity to assemble, link and *index* fragments of previous experiences as building blocks. Where the imagination fails is the ability to prefigure the scenario, the different context to interpret/understand the future because of the failure of our memory not being suitable to prefigure situations not jet lived.

As stated by Tomás Maldonado (1992), to recognise something, the subject must be aware of what is represented – mentioning the "affordance" of cultural artefacts in different cultural contexts and/as a metaphor for the transition caused by the digitisation – i.e. previous experiences at cognitive as well as a perceptive level are the ground of the future knowledge. The memory process is hench much more similar to the *way we may think*, i.e. in an associative process based on meaningful correlations and lived past, namely the hypertext/media notation system, rather than the linearity of the se-

quence of the straightforward notation, the exhibition flow or the closed structure of an archive.

This is indeed the *way we will think* proposed already in 1968 by Ted Nelson (1972), on which he also shaped and developed the Xanadu project. Nelson had foreseen that it could be possible to "store and display documents, together with the ability to perform edits" based on the key concepts of *intercomparison* – the possibility of comparing the versioning of the document – and *transclusion,* i.e. the way to include and cite sources and contributions keeping them recognisable inside the overall mashup of sources and information. If Nelson's imagination explored the hypertext notation system even before decades of Internet development, the founding and fundamental elements of a utopian world archive of knowledge were already identified and established.

In the current transition between a two-dimensional and often single-channel system (predominantly notational/textual and visual) and a much more articulated communicative environment, potentially moving towards hybrid and multimodal spaces (aural/audio, video, moving images, tactile, tangible, haptic, proxemic and so on), the potential for a different and more articulated and integrated memory construction could be the real possibility offered *a priori* by technologies and the digital nature of artefacts themselves.

Being halfway across this *migration* between analogue and digital-native traces and artefacts gives the opportunity to open a meta-design reflection to develop original and full potential models where technologies are mediators of interactions, access and informal learning rather than just an extension of analogue or physical environments.

Nevertheless, the utopic trust in an endless possibility of archiving data (storage) and their forever durability and accessibility must be mitigated by the awareness of the different faces of digital obsolescence. On the one hand, the last decades have already shown that the "graceful degradation" (Gustafson, 2008), versioning, and divestment of platforms, software, and plugins (for instance, Flash Player in 2020) have made entire generations of data and documents, which still exist, no longer operable and accessible. On the other hand, the purely digital nature reproducible indefinitely, however, risks erasing the concept of the primary source in terms of originality, content and antecedence in an indistinguishable mash-up of routes, reports, rather than reproductions, superfetations, stratification and appropriations.

In this sense, meta-museums of technology – such as the Museo Piemontese dell'Informatica (Piedmont Museum of Computing)[3] – itself are beginning to emerge, which by crystallising and preserving systems, hardware and software in their original condition allow the consultation of documents, materials and operations that would otherwise be effectively lost.

This second PAD's issue dedicated to the topic of *Digital Memories* and entitled *Future Heritages* collects 11 essays, organised into three chapters: *Digital Knowledge. Memories as an Interpretation Key*; *Digital Spaces. Technologies as Experience and Narrative Enhancers*; *Digital Archives. New Materiality and Intangible Heritage.* We intended to organise the selected contributions to emphasise different levels of interpretation of the

3   https://www.mupin.it/.

main topic, from more reflexive to case studies description. All essays argue and discuss the connection between past and future, human heritage and enhancement tools.

Interpreting Digital References. The Contribution of "Designerly Knowledge in the Connection between Percepts and Concepts by Vincenzo Cristallo and Miriam Mariani opens the first chapter. The two authors deeply investigate the connection between *percepts* and *concepts* relating to the use of digital storage in the disciplinary context of Design, integrating the observation of the phenomenon with multidisciplinary points of view. Citing various authors, they intended to discuss the organisation of digital references for the design of complex content and of a critical framework within which to understand the characteristics of "designerly knowledge". The vast amount of online data in the design field is fragmented. There is a need for models of interpretation on the subject that help to understand the organising and systemic modalities of design for managing uncertainty as a permanent condition of contemporary data. They support and argue the hypothesis of the advancement of a type of knowledge (and memory) characterised mainly by a spontaneous and disordered growth of information and non-linear narratives, as well as a different way of searching and using references in the field.

Visual Workspace. Towards a Systemic Organizational Model for the Definition of New Digital Spaces for Sharing, Collaboration and Corporate Memory by Chiara L. Remondino and Paolo Tamborrini propose a new model of a corporate intranet. It aims to be a heterarchical model that is not original

in its outward appearance as much as in terms of content to qualify and amplify the organisational memory. Their essay offers an interesting point of view on a functional and operational tool in response to contemporary changes in corporate dynamics by enabling an open, shared, and collaborative environment. Discussing the role of data visualisation inside companies, they emphasise the essential role of such kind of tool to generate long-term tangible change and memory.

In the second chapter, *Digital Spaces. Technologies as Experience and Narrative Enhancers*, the three selected contributions investigate the role of digital and interaction design from different perspectives. The common point is the experiential dimension in museums and exhibition contexts to (re)activate memories related to cultural heritage.

The first essay, signed by Marco Borsotti and Marco Mason, entitled *Immersive Narratives and Memories. The Design of Digital-Enhanced Visitor Experience*, discusses narrative strategies in exhibition design and the use of digital tools. The authors, introducing us to the term narrative, critically review the immersive concept. Then they discuss the concept of the post-digital museum and its theoretical context, presenting some reflections and illustrative examples. They mark the development of the museum's concept and practice, which cannot ignore the paradigm shift in Digital Cultural Heritage and the need to use digital technologies to design immersive and integrated experiences. Thus, considering the relevant interplay of different elements – story(ies), visitors' needs and expectations, digital and physical spaces, digital content, and objects on display.

Yi Zhang, Raffaella Trocchianesi and Mansu Wang, in their essay entitled *Interpreting with Sound. The House Museum as a "Reactivated" Site of Memory in the Digital Age* discuss the valuable role of sound in the reactivation of memories in the space of museums. They intensely focus on sound design, sonic strategies with digital means and the relationship between sound and memory in European house museums through the lens of exhibition design. Sound is becoming increasingly central in experience and communication design and encourages visitors to concentrate on the aspects that most deeply resonate with their interests, stories and memories. The authors support their analysis with a unique typology framework dividing sonic strategies into three distinct areas: hidden sound, diffuse sound, and interactive sound. Thanks to that, they identify innovative sonic strategies that embrace new rituals, enhance omnichannel narratives and achieve immersive engagement.

In the third essay of the second chapter, Giulia Cordin presents us *Bodies of Knowledge. Experiencing the Archive: A Case Study to Re-Activate Memory through Digital Interaction*. The paper presents a smart interactive environment case study for the Temporary Slovene Dance Archive of the Metelkova Museum of Contemporary Art in Ljubljana. The project proposes a physical experience to stimulate public use and understanding of archives. Through it, she critically discusses the role of design in reinterpreting the digital heritage beyond the simple search of metadata on digital platforms.

Finally, in the third chapter, entitled *Digital Archives. New Materiality and Intangible Heritage*, we collected six essays

which focus on various roles, opportunities and functions of Archives in the digital realm.

This closing chapter opens with Roberta Angari's essay, emphatically entitled *Born Digital, Die Digital. Potentials and Risks of Digital Archives.* The contribution deals with the theme of preservation and access to knowledge, with particular attention to the approaches and methodologies employed in the design of digital platforms useful for preserving culture and memory, guaranteeing access for future generations. Specifically, she discusses, through context analysis and a case study of a digital archive, the relationship between society and culture, people and memory. Moreover, she argues the need to think about how people interact with platforms to valorise cultural heritage and about a new category of artefacts, the digital natives, which risk dispersion and deterioration because of the limits of digital systems, which do not guarantee democratisation and access to culture.

In his contribution entitled *The Materials Library as an Interactive Device of Tangible Memory. How to Convey Design Potential in the Metamorphosis of Resources*, Michele De Chirico investigates the potential of an interactive materials library service to transmit the meaning of tangible memory. The author discusses the role of design in preserving, organising and transmitting material culture through a digital platform, making evident the unexpressed opportunities of materials. It is a valuable contribution to understanding the switch of materials libraries from cataloguing systems to physical and digital places aimed at conveying material cultures in-

tended as transitions of society's intangible and semantic values onto the tangible reality.

From material culture, we switch to immaterial Cultural Heritage with Giuseppe Amoruso, Mariana Ciancia, Eloisa Casadei and Alessandro Ianniello's contribution, entitled *Preserving Memory, Safeguarding Heritage. Designing the Digital Library of Living Traditions of Jordanian Handicraft*. The authors present and discuss an ongoing research project. In their paper, they envision the role of storytelling and audio-visual archives in the realm of design for Immaterial Cultural Heritage. Then, they describe the Digital Library's case study, which will collect visual documentation and information about techniques, raw materials, and fabrication tools for the leading traditional Jordanian handicrafts. It is an interesting and well-informed example of the roles of a digital platform, which aims at making content accessible to museums, enhancing the on-site experience and creating interactive touch-points for a broad audience.

The paper *Learn Through Memories. A Didactic Way to Learn and Teach with the Use of a Digital Knitwear Archive* by Martina Motta, Giovannni Maria Conti, and Elisa Rossi reports a research case study. In this case, the project concerns a material archive of knitted samples and its digital traduction to bring innovation to teaching and learning methods, combining the physical and digital dimensions. It represents another intriguing case study through which the authors investigate the needs of knit design students, researchers, and professional designers. Moreover, they argue the advantages and

barriers of a digital archive related to material heritage and the potential of such a resource in learning contexts.

The second to last paper presents another case study of a digital archive in design education. Vincenzo Maselli, Diana Ciufo and Daniela Dispoto, with their contribution entitled *Maranola Digital Memories. Narrating Multimedia Archives as Didactic Outcomes for Communicating the Memories and Traditions of the Town of Maranola*, propose an experimental didactic experience in the fields of design and performing arts. The teaching's main objective was to enhance the memories of the place by designing a narrating multimedia archive to communicate the collective identity through interactive and multimedia narrative mechanisms. Visual storytelling and multimedia communication languages and tools become a means to build an emotional and educational physical experience and a digital archive to narrate the local reality and allow users to participate. The developed and collected projects exploit interactive and audiovisual tools, work with forms ranging from physical to virtual, and create narratives that metaphorically explore the traditions and memories of the place.

Finally, Raissa D'Uffizi discusses the roles, limits, opportunities and models of digital platforms which collect artefacts related to Italian Graphic Design. In her essay, *Memories of Italian Graphic Design History. Digital Dissemination and Immaterial Circulation of Visual Communication Heritage*, she highlights the difficulty in creating a single place to physically preserve graphic design projects and the critical issue of official or copyrighted digital conversions. Through a series

of case studies, she analyses the emergence of independent entities and consequential difficulties for historical research supported by sources. Although visionary, her aim for a new digital archive for the Italian graphic design heritage emphasises the need, if not the urgency, for supporting enhancement projects in the field.

We are well aware that the themes addressed in these two *PAD. Pages on Arts and Design* issues regarding the topics of Digital Memories cannot be considered exhausted. This area will inevitably be increasingly at the core of the discussion on various levels in the next future. In just the past few months, the topic of the apparent boundlessness of space on digital platforms and services has resurfaced on multiple occasions. Consider the "mass extinction events" of digital content caused by the decisions of managers and owners of hosting services and platforms like Twitter (now X), Picturelife, or Imgur (il Post, 2023).

Different but in the same vein is the recent case, entirely Italian, of the dispute between the State television, RAI, and the production company (Officina) of a well-known evening program – "Che Tempo che Fa" – hosted by the renowned Fabio Fazio. Following changes in the Government and the management of national networks, the television program was "cut" from the schedules (then moved to another private channel, i.e. Discovery). However, the issue primarily concerns social media platforms, notably Facebook and Twitter, which RAI executives have obscured. The channels have 591,000 followers and, most importantly, 17,900 posts featuring excerpts

from Sunday evening interviews with prominent figures in entertainment, politics, sports, and general entertainment, both national and international (lo Conte, 2023).

Beyond the evident economic or opportunistic concerns, it is clear that these are incidents erasing pieces of memory. Whether they are individual testimonies or collections of images or videos, posts and related comments, these portions of *documedia* are lost.

Can the culture of design still contribute, going beyond the design of supports, platforms, or digital systems scattered (and at risk of extinction) on the web? From the contributions published in this issue of PAD, it is evident how a certain degree of materiality can still be at the centre of reflection and design practice.

The critical issue is more than the return to materiality. Beyond the design of dissemination, enhancement, and visualisation devices for resources, sources, and physical documents, there are still potential development areas. However, concerning the past and its media, the question remains: are we frightened by a future without memory? And, in all of this, what will be the role of design culture?

Nevertheless, the matter remains unsettled, leaving room for other potential discussions.

Just after the closure of this issue, the social platform known as Twitter and now X was officially renamed and rebranded, starting from the end of July 2023 (Barbera, 2023). Along with other massive changes to the microblogging social platform active since 2006, at least as of the 20th of August, under

Musk's management, images posted up to 2014 became un-traceable (Coats, 2023) (Fig. 1). Therefore, we decided to up-date this introduction with further evidence of what was dis-cussed in the preceding paragraphs. The platform has stated that these images are still stored on Twitter/X servers, but the t.co links are now broken. The famous Ellen Degeneres selfie taken during the 2014 Oscars ceremony is among the removed images. While media related to some significant events may be traceable through other means, it is uncertain whether the same can be said for thousands of other ones. We are facing a form of deletion as unexpected as it is *predictable* within social platforms' policies of monetising our data.

As a paradox or a *falsification*, the digital nature of this pub-lication allows us to include this further consideration of the perishability, or at least ephemerality, of digital documentary sources.

> **Tom Coates** @tomcoates · 3h
>
> Interesting update – the Ellen photo appears to be back – at least for some people. A few people (with blue ticks) seem to be able to see all their photos. I can't see any. It remains extremely unclear what is going on.
>
> 💬 12   ↻ 11   ♡ 48   ▅ 11.137   ⬆
>
> ↻ **Repost di Tom Coates**
>
> **Tom Coates** @tomcoates · 18h
>
> More vandalism from @elonmusk. Twitter has now removed all media posted before 2014. Thats – so far – almost a decade of pictures and videos from the early 2000s removed from the service.
>
> For example, here's a search of my media tweets from before 2014.
> twitter.com/search?q=From%...
>
> > 👥 **I lettori hanno aggiunto informazioni contestuali che, a loro avviso, potrebbero essere interessanti per gli altri**
> >
> > Images before/around 2014 are still saved on Twitter/X's servers, however, the t.co links appear to be broken at the moment.
> >
> > The famous Ellen DeGeneres selfie from the 2014 Oscars is currently missing from her tweet.
> > twitter.com/EllenDeGeneres...
> > But the original file is still available on their servers.
> > pbs.twimg.com/media/BhxWutnC...
> >
> > twitter.com/Accountabilabu...
> >
> > La trovi utile?   **Valutala**
>
> Le informazioni contestuali sono scritte da chi usa X e vengono mostrate quando gli altri le reputano utili. Scopri di più.
>
> 💬 339   ↻ 10.306   ♡ 11.729   ▅ 11,2 Mln   ⬆

Figure 1. Tom Coates (2023) tweets related to the removal of all media posted before 2014 on Twitter (now X).

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In 2019 he co-edited the book "Cultural Landscape in Practice. Conservation vs. Emergencies" (with Rossella Salerno). He designed the colour code masterplan for the historical centre *façade* of Meldola and Morciano di Romagna and, recently, the proposal for reconstructing the centre of Amatrice after the earthquake. Chair of INTBAU ITALIA, International Network for Traditional Building Architecture & Urbanism, currently he is the director of the International Cooperation Program for the improvement and enhancement of the Folklore Museum, the Museum of Popular Traditions and the Roman Theater of Amman, documenting the 3D reconstruction of the Roman Theatre of Amman and developing the proposal for a "Digital Library of Living Traditions".
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In 2018, she discussed a PhD at Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza about the economy and handicrafts of Ancient Mesopotamia. Since 2009 she has conducted researches and field campaigns in Jordan and Iraq, aiming at the reconstruction of the cultural landscape of past societies. She collaborated with several international projects conducted by the British Museum, the University of Cambridge, the Penn University Museum (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), the Ludwig Maximilians Universität in Munich, and the American School of Oriental Research.
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The fields of communication design, storytelling, and digital technologies have been investigated in research and educational activities to define processes, methods, and tools since 2010.

National and international publications include books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings on the transmedia phenomenon, communication strategies, the transformative power of stories, narrative formats (interactive narratives), and audiovisual artefacts.

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Independent architect and set designer, she studied Architecture in Porto (FAUP) and Rome (La Sapienza), graduating with honours in 2012. As a Leonardo Da Vinci fellow recipient, she moved to the Netherlands in 2013, where she started a long-lasting collaboration with several offices as a freelance architect. During the past Academic Years, she has been first assistant in the Sapienza Design Department (PDTA) and then Adjunct Professor in "Performing Arts and New Media Studio", currently enrolled in a PhD course at the same Department in the field of Urban Studies. Her projects stand mainly in the field of temporary architecture and scenic design (her installations have been set at: Teatro Biondo Palermo, Les Halles Schaerbeek Bruxelles, CSS Udine, TPE Torino, Milano Salone, Pergine and Oriente Occidente Festivals). The relationship between people, inhabitants, spectators and space is the main point of her research.

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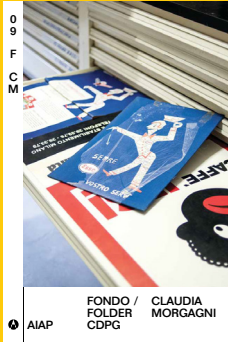yi.zhang@polimi.it

275

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