

### 3. Project Brief .

The projects and policies of a territory are inevitably complex and even fragmented. They can involve different administrative bodies and technical sectors that are not always inter-coordinated, and deal with projects that vary from environmental policy to infrastructure, projects encouraging social integration and actions involving public security.

In upcoming years, the area we are about to study will undergo deep transformation, urban restructuring and upgrading, as well as new construction. What the projects are not yet able to interpret are, above all, the perceptions and the opinions of the people who live in this multi-dimensional city. What do the inhabitants feel about these changes? How do they represent the territory they live in, which cognitive maps reflect their views regarding the identity of these places? Which images of the city do they expect, fear and desire?

#### 3.1. Intervention area: northern Torino – the confluence of the Po and Stura di Lanzo rivers.

**The north-east quadrant of the city. (Regio Parco, Barriera di Milano, Barca, Bertolla)**

In the recent history of the transformation of Torino, important urban projects have not concentrated on the areas along the Stura di Lanzo and Po rivers. Instead, city expansion north of the big factories like Teksid, Michelin and Officine Savigliano – which have now been substituted by the buildings of the “spina 3” – has basically maintained the hybrid characteristics inherited from the development of working class neighbourhoods. These areas were developed during the early 1900s along the customs boundaries, tying themselves to the manufacturing activities that had exploited the driving force of the rivers since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the following decades the area was primarily dedicated to peripheral and service sector functions: the railway terminal, the great expansion of new productive activities north of the Stura river, garbage dumps and power station transformers.

Except for projects to upgrade the riverbanks that were promoted by the Ente Parco Po and by the Corona Verde project starting in 1997, the river landscape in this part of the city has never been considered a structural element of the surroundings but simply a border, a margin, or at the most the neighbourhood’s backyard.

#### 3.2. Site description.

**The historical-environmental value and the orographic scenario: Basse di Stura and Regio Parco.**

Over the centuries, the confluence of the Po and Stura rivers has been one of the most valued parts of the city from an environmental point of view. For instance, the first Savoy royal residence after the capital of the Duchy was moved to Torino in 1563 was Viboccone (1568), that was constructed where the two rivers intersect. This is also where Carlo Emanuele III constructed one of the city’s first industrial complexes in 1758, the Regia Fabbrica del Tabacco, which still exists today (the tobacco manufacturer itself was closed in 1996). Starting in 1828, the park of the royal residence has been occupied by the city’s Monumental Cemetery.

The system of rivers at the foot of the hillsides, right below the Basilica of Superga, still represents an extended interruption of the conurbation, and offers many possibilities for transforming and relaunching the area. If today the banks of the Stura river are mainly considered an area of squalor or, more simply, inaccessible – this is where the infamous “junkie park” is located – their environmental layout still represent a precious potential for new and different visions of the city of the future. Recent urban projects have finally focused on the area’s centrality, not just from an environmental point of view, and a major

project to transform buildings and the infrastructure has been initiated. The Vanchiglia freight yard, with its 180,000 square metres, will be the object of an integrated project including an urban park adjacent to the cemetery, new residential and commercial blocks, the second line of the subway system and an underground yard for the subway trains. The Piazza Sofia area is also being studied for new constructions along its border with the river park and a community golf course is being planned on the right bank of the Stura river.

**Web references:**

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<http://www.comune.torino.it/ambiente/verde/bassestura.htm>

### 3.4. Group Tasks.

How can the city be made legible and comprehensible as a complex network of physical and social relations?

For this workshop we will experiment with the concept of 'Actor-Network' as suggest by John Law and Bruno Latour. The central concept of the Actor-Network is that all situations, in this case our local site, are complicated entities that are made up of a range of competing actors with different interests. This suggests that local areas are made up of relationships between people, material things (places & objects) as well as 'semiotic' entities such as ideas and concepts.

So for example a local school is an entity that shapes the social relationships of all its pupils as well as the people who work there. It is also an educational establishment which is affected local government policy. Its also a physical location that has an impact on the local environment through its transportation needs. Also its past and history have shaped it as well as the schooling of the local area.

Sidorova & Sarker define an actor as: "Any element which bends space around itself, makes other elements dependent upon itself and translate their will into the language of its own. Common examples of actors include humans, collectivities of humans, texts, graphical representations, and technical artefacts. Actors, all of which have interests, try to convince other actors so as to create an alignment of the other actors' interests with their own interests. When this persuasive process becomes effective, it results in the creation of an actor-network."



Actor-Networks are essentially a holistic way of looking at any context and examining the actual relationships between lots of apparently unconnected elements. The aim of our workshop is to try to unravel the local Actor-Network in our target area and to comprehend the complexity of the place and visualise it. This way of analysing connections allows us to see the network from the point of view of any actor. So for example we could look at the building of a new school from the point of view of a local park. For the park, the new school will have a variety of impacts on its existence with the need for land and play grounds and pollution from roads as well as increased usage by pupils. This subjective way of looking at networks is very useful for seeing how changes will impact particular actors. By making these networks publicly visible to all the actors (stakeholders) of the area, they will be able to enter into a more informed public discussions.

### **Experimental Ethnography + Analytical Urbanism + Information Design**

“Ethnographers cannot help but lie, but in lying, we reveal truths that escape those who are not so bold”. Gary Alan Fine

This project is an experiment and a challenge on multiple levels. We will going into an area of Turin that we know very little about, designing methodologies and research strategies to explore the place and engage with the people. This aiming at developing new ways to communicate our insights and make them 'productive'. Oh... and all this has to happen in just 6 days!

The project time is divided into three phases:

Participatory Ethnography	30%
Analytical Urbanism	30%
Information Design	40%

Based on previous experience, this breakdown in terms of time works best because it is very easy to gather an enormous amount of data and then not have enough time to analyse or visualise it.

You will be divided into five groups to work with one of the following themes:

- Sense of place – What is this place ?
- People – Who lives there and why and where do they meet?
- Security/ Insecurity – What are the local fears and dangers?
- Environment – How are the local people engaged with their surroundings?
- Future Visions – What are the current ideas and how can we stimulate new visions?
- Mobility – Where do people want to get to and how to we get there?
- Local resources – What are they and how can we use them?
- Stakeholders – Who has a political say or ownership over what elements?

Each one of these topics are ways to look at an area. Each one will require a series of different approaches to gather information and then finally to visualise it.

Your aim is to explore the site and to interview and interact with the local people of the place as well as the place itself. Each group will be provided with:

- Several A3 copies of the site map
- Series of pencils and drawing pens
- Digital Audio Recorder
- Sketch book
- GPS



- Blind folds
- Background data about the site

You will no doubt require some other materials which we will have to beg/borrow and improvise.

### **Ethnographic Approach**

This activity will take the first two days and will involve you being in the project area and observing and interacting with local people. The aim is to find ways to connect with the issues of the place by any means necessary. The project team will give a talk on Ethnographic methods, present some of the case studies, and then talk about some of the tools and methods which we can try out and expand upon.

We are interested in the ideas and perceptions of the local people since they are the experts on their area, but we are also interested in our own perceptions since as outsiders can perceive certain things that are hard to see when one is too close. We are trying to develop a design ethnography that allows us to work with local people to document their ideas and thoughts as well as our own. This can be as simple as sitting down and talking with people or as complex as analysing and reshaping demographic data. Each local context is different and requires a different set of approaches.

### **Contexts**

How you approach people is very important. If there are any markets happening then they are great places to approach people and talk to them. Cafes can also be good places. If there are no obvious public spaces then you may have to do door-to-door interviews which are tricky. Make sure you go in pairs to do these. You basically have two challenges, time and language. Real ethnographic work is normally based on living in an area and working with people for a minimum of 18 months. Language is a challenge but each group should have at least 1 Italian speaker in it. Also the lack of language can be a creative possibility. People will sometimes spend more time with you than they would with a native. Try to talk to approach a large number and variety of people as possible but the aim is quality over quantity.

Possible tools and methods to use :

#### **1 Pen and Paper Maps**

Using photocopied maps you can go and get people to locate an enormous amount of local details

For example:

*What are the boundaries of this area?*

*What are the most important places in this area?*

*Where do you feel well?*

#### **2 Drawing sheets**

Using blank sheets with just a simple question. Get young and old people to draw responses to a series of questions. For example:

*Draw and describe where you go and meet your friends*

*Draw and describe the most dangerous people in this area*

*Draw and describe the best things about this area*

*Draw and describe the worst things about this area*

*Draw and describe what this place might look like in the future*



### 3 Interviews

Simply sit down with someone and find out about their life and ideas. Try to get yourself invited into people's houses. If you are exploring who are the shareholders of this area then this activity is very important. Plan your questions but be prepared to go with the flow of the conversation. If things go wrong don't worry go back and change your questions and approach different people.

### 3 Sensory Mapping

This activity can be done by the project group or with local people and involves using the blind folds and ... so that the subject can't hear or see.

### 4 GPS tracks

Recording and using your GPS tracks can give you a lot of useful

### 5 Observation

While apparently simple, this is actually the most complicated activity because we naturally do it constantly anyway. The difficult thing is how to extract useful insights. We are not really looking for beautiful photo essays but for analytical information that tells us about the local actor networks.

### 6 Workshops

This involves setting up a collaborative working environment with a group of local people. These could be setup to do Sensory Mapping or some other communal activity that generates discussion. These contexts allow the most in-depth understanding of what is happening in a place.

## **Analytical Urbanism**

This phase of the project involves analysing the huge amounts of stuff that you have collected and trying to make sense of it. This activity involves working within your small groups and grouping and the information into categories and finding connections. We will look at a number of different qualitative approaches such as Discourse Analysis as well as some quantitative statistical methods. The key is to find patterns and connections between our data. This is the time to examine all the background demographic information about the area and seeing how your information relates to the official data. At this stage you will share your initial findings with the other groups and find a huge amount of overlaps emerging. You may want to refocus your groups topic or collaborate with another group. This is also the point to start to think about how to visualise your findings. If you feel there are gaps in what you have found it is also the time to go back and try to gather some more information from the site.

## **Information Design**

This part of the section of the project involves exploring how we might visualise and communicate our ideas. Our main project partner the Urban Centre are our client who we have to communicate our findings to. The visualisations can take a large number of different forms but we will have access to a large scale ink jet plotter so there is a lot of incentive for each group to produce a large scale print output. One thing you might like to consider is the creation of a series of specific local pictograms that illustrate the local dynamics of the site.

Tools that you will find invaluable will be



Illustrator for vector drawings, also has inbuilt graphing function  
Open Office -  
<http://www.gpsvisualizer.com> – this is an incredibly useful website  
Processing  
Flash  
Google Earth  
Omni Graffle

Remember that we are trying to develop insights that could only be gathered by being on the ground in the project area. The aim is not just to make pretty images that wow people, but to communicate our understanding of this area.

### **3.4. Expected goal.**

The workshop proposes a series of objectives that vary from highly instrumental ones (awareness and familiarity with the instruments) to highly political ones involving the activities and needs of the organisation that commissioned the workshop, Urban Centre Metropolitano.

The first objective is to experiment which methods and instruments for research, mapping and representation can reveal and portray the various levels that define the complexity of contemporary urban systems and, in this case, “the coexistence of different communities, different uses and values; the fast development of a new infrastructural network and the different perceptions of the same territory”.

The instruments proposed, including technology that is already employed by the project leader for other projects, will be used to stimulate, reveal and represent, and share the tacit knowledge of the citizens, their subjective sensations and perceptions regarding some of the levels of complexity of the chosen area. Wherever possible, the data and the quantitative and codified information (for example, traffic flow in the area) and the awareness, tacit and subjective perceptions of the citizens (for example, their perception of traffic, subjective mobility, evaluation of accessibility and distance) will be integrated. The data, information and knowledge gathered and organised will help produce communications material (maps and diagrams) that will not only help portray what has been learned but also help construct a new perception of the area.

Together, the maps and diagrams will serve two purposes:

- Communicate to the citizens, first of all, and to other stakeholders interested in the transformational potential of the area:
- Supply information and knowledge that can help orient decision-making processes and align future actions with the expectations and needs of the inhabitants: which expectations? What kind of future?

The involvement of citizens in producing and portraying the information and knowledge of the area will serve the more general objective of the Summer School, which is to activate local resources – in this case, people – to produce value and artefacts that can then be transferred onto a global scale (and codified).

### **3.5. Suggestions in exploration.**

We will be using a range of methods to explore the area and engage with people. Some will be provided by the project team but the expectation is that you start to develop and modify your own methods very rapidly. We suggest some reading matter and give suggestions for tackling the various phases of the workshop.



As a general premise, our research work in the field and exploration of the territory could turn out to be, if not difficult, tough on first impact. We feel it is very useful to recall some insights of Marianella Sclavi on the art of listening. The successful outcome of this phase will depend very much on your willingness to create a good relationship with the people you meet. Be good listeners, trying to follow the Seven rules of the Art of Listening:

1. Never be in a hurry to reach conclusions. Conclusions are the most ephemeral part of your research.
2. What you are seeing depends on your point of view. In order to see your point of view, you have to change it.
3. In order to understand what another person is saying, you must assume that he/she is right and ask him/her to help you to understand how come so it is.
4. The emotions are basic tools of knowledge if you understand that they speak a language of analogies and relationships. They don't tell you what you are looking at, but how you are looking at it.
5. A good listener is an explorer of possible worlds. The signals which he or she finds most important are the ones that seem both negligible and annoying, both marginal and irritating, since they refuse to mesh with previous convictions and certainties.
6. A good listener is happy to accept the self-contradictions that come to the fore in personal thoughts and interpersonal communications. Misunderstandings are accepted as occasions for entering the most exciting field of all: the creative management of conflicts.
7. To become an expert in listening you must follow a humorous methodology. But when you have learnt how to listen, it is humor that will follow you.