

Inclusive Merchandising. A storyteller for an accessible university

*Original*

Inclusive Merchandising. A storyteller for an accessible university / Oddone, Monica; Bozzola, Marco; De Giorgi, Claudia.  
- In: DIID. - ISSN 2785-2245. - ELETTRONICO. - (2023), pp. 344-353. (Intervento presentato al convegno Disrupting Geographies in the Design World. tenutosi a Bologna (ITA) nel 20-22 giugno 2022).

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2984085 since: 2023-11-25T16:12:17Z

*Publisher:*

Bologna University Press

*Published*

DOI:

*Terms of use:*

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

*Publisher copyright*

(Article begins on next page)

# diid

disegno industriale  
industrial design

theoria  
pòiesis  
praxis

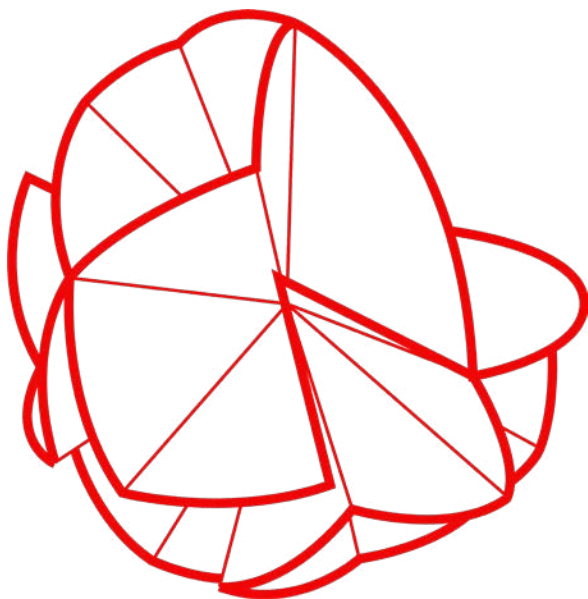
diid.it

DIGITAL  
SPECIAL  
ISSUE  
1

## Disrupting Geographies in the Design World

Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> International  
Forum of Design as a Process

Alma Mater Studiorum — Università di Bologna



Editors  
(Eds.)

Erik Ciravegna

Elena Formia

Valentina Gianfrate

Andreas Sicklinger

Michele Zannoni

# Colophon

**diid**  
**disegno industriale**  
**industrial design**  
**Digital Special Issue 1**  
— DSI 1

**Year**  
XXI

diid is an open access  
peer-reviewed scientific  
design journal

diid is published  
three times a year

Registration at Tribunale  
di Roma 86/2002  
(March 6, 2002)

www.diid.it

Print subscription  
(3 issues)  
Euro 60,00  
Subscription office  
ordini@buponline.it

**Editor-in-chief**  
Flaviano Celaschi  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Deputy Editor-in-chief  
and Managing Editor**  
Elena Formia  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Editors**  
Erik Ciravegna  
Elena Formia  
Valentina Gianfrate  
Andreas Sicklinger  
Michele Zannoni  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Founded by**  
Tonino Paris

**Associate Editors**  
Viktor Malakuczi  
Sapienza — Università  
di Roma

Lorela Mehmeti  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

Elena Vai  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Art Director**  
Davide Giorgetta

**Editing Assistant**  
Olga Barmine

**CC BY-NC-SA**  
Creative Commons  
Attribution  
NonCommercial  
ShareAlike

Copyright © 2023  
diid disegno industriale  
industrial design

**Publisher**  
Fondazione  
Bologna University Press  
Via Saragozza 10  
40123 Bologna  
Tel. (+39) 051 232 882  
Fax (+39) 051 221 019  
www.buponline.com  
info@buponline.com

**ISSN**  
1594-8528

**ISSN Online**  
2785-2245

**DOI**  
10.30682/diiddsi23

**ISBN Online**  
979-12-5477-329-1

## Scientific Board

**Mariana Amatullo**  
Parsons School of Design  
— The New School

**Laura Badalucco**  
Università Iuav di Venezia

**Alberto Bassi**  
Università Iuav di Venezia

**Anna Bernagozzi**  
École nationale supérieure  
des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

**Paola Bertola**  
Politecnico di Milano

**David Bihanic**  
Université Paris 1  
Panthéon-Sorbonne

**Andrea Boeri**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Olindo Caso**  
Delft University  
of Technology

**Manuela Celi**  
Politecnico di Milano

**Erik Ciravegna**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Mirko Daneluzzo**  
Dubai Institute of Design  
and Innovation

**Claudia De Giorgi**  
Politecnico di Torino

**Alessandro Deserti**  
Politecnico di Milano

**Dijon De Moraes**  
Universidade do Estado  
de Minas Gerais

**Franco Fassio**  
Università di Scienze  
Gastronomiche di Pollenzo

**Daniele Fanzini**  
Politecnico di Milano

**Luigi Ferrara**  
George Brown College

**Carlo Franzato**  
Pontifícia Universidade  
Católica do Rio de Janeiro  
— PUC-Rio

**Giuseppe Furlanis**  
ISIA Design Firenze

**Claudio Germak**  
Politecnico di Torino

**Valentina Gianfrate**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Miaosen Gong**  
Jiangnan University

**Christian Guellerin**  
École de Design Nantes  
Atlantique

**Roberto Iñiguez Flores**  
Tecnológico de Monterrey

**Çiğdem Kaya**  
Istanbul Technical  
University

**Giuseppe Lotti**  
Università degli Studi  
di Firenze

**Mario Losasso**  
Università degli Studi  
di Napoli Federico II

**Roberto Montanari**  
Università degli Studi  
Suor Orsola Benincasa  
di Napoli

**Nicola Morelli**  
Aalborg University

**Andrew David Morrison**  
Oslo School of Architecture  
and Design

**Spartaco Paris**  
Sapienza Università  
di Roma

**Daniela Petrelli**  
Sheffield Hallam University

**Andreas Sicklinger**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Francesca Tosi**  
Università degli Studi  
di Firenze

**Ambra Trotto**  
RISE — Research  
Institutes of Sweden

**Michele Zannoni**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

## Reviewers

The Proceedings of the 8th International Forum of Design as a Process have undergone a rigorous peer-review process to ensure the scholarly quality of the contributions contained herein.

The Editors extend their sincere appreciation to the following Scholars who served as Reviewers for this Digital Special Issue.

Tarek Abdellatif	Valentina Frosini	João Nunes Sampaio
Cosimo Accoto	Rossana Gaddi	Boon Ong
Elena Alfaro	Vanessa Galvin	Giulio Palmitessa
Giulia Allegrini	Silvia Gasparotto	Anty Pansera
Margherita Ascari	Pamela Gatica	Veronica Pasini
Margarida Azevedo	Gionata Gatto	Amina Pereno
Laura Badalucco	Angela Giambattista	Merav Perez
Silvia Barbero	Valentina Gianfrate	Pier Paolo Peruccio
Luca Barbieri	Clara Giardina	Bárbara Pino Ahumada
Esra Bici Nasir	Carlo Giardinetti	Davide Pletto
Alessandra Bosco	Debora Giorgi	Gregory Polletta
Saveria Olga Murielle	Michael Gray	Alessandro Pollini
Boulanger	Pablo Hermansen	Shalini Prasad
Sabrina Bresciani	Oscar Huerta	Diego Pucci
Elena Brigi	Çiğdem Kaya	Nathalie Rodríguez Estrada
Francesca Calabrese	Elif Kocabiyik	Valentina Rognoli
Alberto Calleo	Christopher Kueh	Maximiliano Romero
Alfredo Calosci	Kristina Lamour Sansone	Ludovica Rosato
Serena Cangiano	Jennifer Lane	Ilaria Ruggeri
Stefano Capolongo	Carla Langella	Francesca Sabatini
Lina María Cárdenas	Lorna Lares López	Mariana Salgado
Paolo Cardini	Beatriz Leal Ramos	Jorge Sanabria
John Cardozo	Margo Lengua	David Sánchez Ruano
Giorgio Casoni	Ruth Maribel León-Morán	Romina Santi
Andrea Cattabriga	Beatrice Lerma	Andreas Sicklinger
Manuela Celi	Ami Licaj	Leila Signorelli
Gabriel Cereceda	Lígia Lopes	Ricardo Sosa
Simona Colitti	Anna Lottersberger	Frank Spencer
Pietro Costa	Stefano Luca	Chiara Sponza
Doriana Dal Palù	Patricia Mann	Laura Succini
Giorgio Dall'Osso	John Martin	Ermanno Tasca
Dolly Daou	Martina Massari	Martin Tironi
Antonio De Feo	Mauricio Mejía	Umberto Tolino
Vanessa De Luca	Paula Melo Signerez	Florencia Toro Silva
Barbara Del Curto	Riccardo Mercuri	Beatrice Turillazzi
Özgen Osman Demirbaş	Leonel Merino	Elena Vai
Carmelo Di Bartolo	Giuseppe Mincoletti	Virginia Vignali
Loredana Di Lucchio	Katharine Mollenhauer	Paula Wuth
Amir Djalali	Pierluigi Molteni	Burcu Yahız
Alice Donferri Mitelli	Carlos Montaña	Nélida Yanet Ramírez Triana
Sergio Donoso	Roberto Montanari	Michele Zannoni
Seyedarshia Eghbali	Edgardo Moraga	Carola Zurob
Paola Fabbri	Alfonso Morone	
Daniele Fanzini	Erica Isa Mosca	
Anne Farren	Federica Natalia Rosati	

14

**The Latin Network for the Development  
of Design Processes**

16

**8th Forum Main Partners**

18

**Disrupting Geographies  
in the Design World**

20

**People**

26

**Impact**

**Track 1**

# **There's No Plan(et) B: Sustainable Transitions to Systemic Planet-Centric Design**

30

**There's No Plan(et) B.  
Sustainable Transitions to  
Systemic Planet-Centric Design**  
Erik Ciravegna, Clara Giardina, Davide Pletto

40

**Beyond Collaboration: A Network Analysis  
of Local Stances and Global Frameworks  
in the Collective Design of the City**  
Francesca Sabatini, Martina Massari,  
Saveria Olga Murielle Boulanger

50

**Alter\_Azioni: Designing  
between Biological and Artifactual.  
Scenarios for a Short-Term Future**  
Pietro Costa, Raffaella Fagnoni

62

**(Systemic) Design for Sustainable  
Territorial Transition: A Literature  
Review of State of the Art**  
Asja Aulisio, Silvia Barbero, Amina Pereno

72

**Dasein ist Design:  
An Ontological Discussion of Design  
in the Ecological Crisis Time**  
Sabrina Lucibello, Carmen Rotondi

80

**The More-Than-Human Trend  
in Design Research: A Literature Review**  
Annapaola Vacanti, Francesco Burlando,  
Isabella Nevoso, Massimo Menichinelli

90

**Being and Nature.  
The Aesthetic Ecocentrism**  
Adriano Pinho, Francisco Providência

102

**Forward to the Primitive.  
New Sustainable Design Processes  
Characterized by Primitive Aesthetic**  
Jurji Filieri, Elisabetta Benelli

110

**How Long Does It Take For a Paradigm Shift. A Design-based Critical Essay on Materials and Fabrication Processes**

Guilherme Giantini, Lígia Lopes

118

**Sustainability Needs Service Efficacy**

Chiara Olivastri, Giovanna Tagliasco

126

**Systemic Design Applied to Medtech. Guidelines for Corporate Training on Sustainable Healthcare**

Enrica Ferrero, Giulia Ferrero

138

**Reducing Waste in Healthcare: A Systemic Design Approach for Sustainable Disposables Manufacturers**

Gabriele Maria Cito, Angela Giambattista

150

**A Framework to Design Appliances for the Circular Economy Scenario**

Chiara Battistoni

162

**Digital Fashion Technologies & Practices: Design Driven Sustainable Transition in Fashion Industry**

Ludovica Rosato, Alberto Calleo

170

**Material Resources as a Contextual Complex System**

Michele De Chirico

180

**Diffuse Micro-Factory: Circular Distributed Production System for Microbial Nanocellulose**

Lorena Trebbi

190

**From Sea to Fashion. Seaweeds as Material for a Sustainable Transition**

Paolo Franzo, Clizia Moradei

198

**The Sound of Sustainability. Biomaterials and New Sensory Frontiers**

Giovanni Inglese, Sabrina Lucibello, Carmen Rotondi

208

**Unpacking Ceramic History in Asia and Europe: Contribution to New Reusable Packaging Design**

Raquel Gomes, Cláudia Albino

**Track 2**

# Intersectional Design for an Accessible and Empowering World

220

**Intersectional Design for an Accessible and Empowering World: Views from the 8th Forum of Design as a Process**

Valentina Gianfrate, Lígia Lopes, Margherita Ascari, Simona Colitti

226

**Viva! Colinas. Service Design for Tourism and Reconciliation in Communities of Former Colombian Guerrilla**

Beatriz Bonilla Berrocal

238

**The Digital Archive as an Inclusive Tool for Knowledge Construction Through Design Practices**

Alessandra Bosco, Fiorella Bulegato, Silvia Gasparotto

248

**Intercultural Design Approach. Narrative Design for a Multicultural Society**

Irene Caputo, Marco Bozzola, Claudia De Giorgi

258

**From Wayfinding to Placefinding.  
Orientation and Alterity in Urban Spaces**  
Daniela D'Avanzo, Salvatore Zingale

268

**A Meta-Analysis for an Interactive,  
Intersectional and Inclusive  
Exhibition Based on the SDGs**  
Sergio Degiacomi, Francesca Zoccarato,  
Simone De Pascalis, Pietro Crovari,  
Fabio Catania

278

**From Empathy to Inclusive Design:  
Multisensory Solutions for (Not Only)  
Socially Sustainable Projects**  
Federica Delprino

288

**Etnography in Sever Do Vouga:  
Reality<>Change First Step to Engage  
a Creative and Rural Community**  
Pedro Fragoso Lopes, Gonalo Gomes

298

**The Implementation of U.D. in a Metal  
Processing Plant of the Metropolitan  
Zone of Guadalajara (MZG)**  
Luis Erik Hernandez Sanchez, Enrique  
Herrera Lugo, Jaime Francisco Gomez  
Gomez, Francisco Javier Gonzalez Madariaga

312

**Towards Better Public Sector Innovation.  
Co-designing Solutions to Improve  
Inclusion and Integration**  
Ilaria Mariani, Francesca Rizzo, Grazia  
Concilio

322

**Creating Methodological  
Design Processes for Empowering  
Artisans of Cali, Colombia**  
Edgar Andres Martnez Muoz,  
Diana Marcela Giraldo Pinedo

332

**Empowering Through Design:  
Regional Development Strategy  
of Los Lagos as an Intersectional Case**  
Daniel Moreno, Katherine Mollenhauer,  
Arturo Orellana

344

**Inclusive Merchandising.  
A Storyteller for an Accessible University**  
Monica Oddone, Marco Bozzola,  
Claudia De Giorgi

354

**Geopolitics of Fashion. Glocal Power  
Evidence and Design Activism for Leading  
Disrupting Textile Debris in Chile**  
Barbara Pino Ahumada

366

**Intersectional Design in Practice: A Critical  
Perspective on Sustainability for All**  
Alessandro Pollini, Pilar Orero,  
Alessandro Caforio

374

**Empower to Care or Care to Empower?  
The Theory Behind the Practice  
That Transforms**  
Marcia Santos da Silva, Gustavo Severo de  
Borba

384

**Perspectives of Sound: Promoting  
Social Inclusion Under the Principle  
of "Access for All" in Museums**  
Yi Zhang, Raffaella Trocchianesi

# Track 2

## Intersectional Design for an Accessible and Empowering World

Social positions and identities are multiple and seek to reveal the interconnected systems of subordination that together influence people's life chances. Extending beyond gender-specific and empowering categories of social identity (youth, old age, disabilities, non-heteronormative sexuality, despised ethnicity, income, religion and more), intersectionality focuses attention on a variety of multi-level interacting social locations, forces, narratives, norms, factors and power structures that shape and influence human life.

Intersectionality is increasingly suggested an innovative design framework with the potential to advance understanding of, and action, on inequalities, by highlighting processes of stigmatization, but mainly to encourage a critical reflection to move beyond singular categories, foregrounds issues of equity.

The track intends to collect design studies and practices which include the perspectives and worldviews of people who are typically marginalized or excluded, in which social justice and equity can be understood as a way of transforming how resources and relationships are produced and distributed to ensure a dignified and ecologically sustainable life for all. It also aims to outline in which way the dimensions of time and space, fluid, changeable and experienced through our interpretations, senses and feelings, influence different kinds of knowledge, through a deconstruction of the conventional social orders of meaning. Possible topics include concepts of accessibility, empowerment and people autonomy.

### CHAIR

**Lígia Lopes**  
University of Porto

### CO-CHAIR

**Valentina Gianfrate**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

### TRACK EDITORS

**Margherita Ascari**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

**Simona Colitti**  
Alma Mater Studiorum  
— Università di Bologna

Social justice  
Empowerment  
Diverse knowledge  
Gendered innovation  
People autonomy



220

**Intersectional Design for an Accessible and Empowering World: Views from the 8th Forum of Design as a Process**

Valentina Gianfrate, Lúcia Lopes, Margherita Ascari, Simona Colitti

226

**Viva! Colinas. Service Design for Tourism and Reconciliation in Communities of Former Colombian Guerrilla**

Beatriz Bonilla Berrocal

238

**The Digital Archive as an Inclusive Tool for Knowledge Construction Through Design Practices**

Alessandra Bosco, Fiorella Bulegato, Silvia Gasparotto

248

**Intercultural Design Approach. Narrative Design for a Multicultural Society**

Irene Caputo, Marco Bozzola, Claudia De Giorgi

258

**From Wayfinding to Placefinding. Orientation and Alterity in Urban Spaces**

Daniela D'Avanzo, Salvatore Zingale

268

**A Meta-Analysis for an Interactive, Intersectional and Inclusive Exhibition Based on the SDGs**

Sergio Degiacomi, Francesca Zoccarato, Simone De Pascalis, Pietro Crovari, Fabio Catania

278

**From Empathy to Inclusive Design: Multisensory Solutions for (Not Only) Socially Sustainable Projects**

Federica Delprino

288

**Ethnography in Sever Do Vouga: Reality->Change First Step to Engage a Creative and Rural Community**

Pedro Fragoso Lopes, Gonalo Gomes

298

**The Implementation of U.D. in a Metal Processing Plant of the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara (MZG)**

Luis Erik Hernandez Sanchez, Enrique Herrera Lugo, Jaime Francisco Gomez Gomez, Francisco Javier Gonzalez Madariaga

312

**Towards Better Public Sector Innovation. Co-designing Solutions to Improve Inclusion and Integration**

Ilaria Mariani, Francesca Rizzo, Grazia Concilio

322

**Creating Methodological Design Processes for Empowering Artisans of Cali, Colombia**

Edgar Andres Martnez Muoz, Diana Marcela Giraldo Pinedo

332

**Empowering Through Design: Regional Development Strategy of Los Lagos as an Intersectional Case**

Daniel Moreno, Katherine Mollenhauer, Arturo Orellana

344

**Inclusive Merchandising. A Storyteller for an Accessible University**

Monica Oddone, Marco Bozzola, Claudia De Giorgi

354

**Geopolitics of Fashion. Global Power Evidence and Design Activism for Leading Disrupting Textile Debris in Chile**

Brbara Pino Ahumada

366

**Intersectional Design in Practice: A Critical Perspective on Sustainability for All**

Alessandro Pollini, Pilar Orero, Alessandro Caforio

374

**Empower to Care or Care to Empower? The Theory Behind the Practice That Transforms**

Marcia Santos da Silva, Gustavo Severo de Borja

384

**Perspectives of Sound: Promoting Social Inclusion Under the Principle of "Access for All" in Museums**

Yi Zhang, Raffaella Trocchianesi

# Inclusive Merchandising. A Storyteller for an Accessible University

**Monica Oddone**

Politecnico di Torino

monica.oddone@polito.it

ORCID 0000-0003-0135-2182

**Marco Bozzola**

Politecnico di Torino

marco.bozzola@polito.it

ORCID 0000-0002-2119-3927

**Claudia De Giorgi**

Politecnico di Torino

claudia.degiorgi@polito.it

ORCID 0000-0002-9667-5330

## Abstract

Following recent social and global transformations, cultural organizations have undergone a major redefinition in their role as keepers and promoters of knowledge and heritage, developing virtuous examples and reference models for the free, open, and autonomous enjoyment of all audiences. This contribution - contextualized in a current doctoral research on the enhancement of cultural heritage, promotion of institutional and territorial identities - is presented as a reflection on the recent awareness and attention to the issues of inclusiveness and accessibility in places of culture, especially higher education institutions. Through an analytical work on numerous university case studies, focused on institutional merchandising products, it was possible to outline common attitudes and effective communication strategies that promote core values related to multiculturalism, body positivity, gender equality, women's empowerment, and integration of ethnic minorities.

## Keywords

Accessibility  
Cultural Heritage  
Diversity  
Higher Education  
Inclusivity

Free access and enjoyment of cultural heritage by all individuals is recognized in the Article 27 of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, emphasizing the importance of collective participation in cultural, artistic, and scientific life as a dynamic process in continuous evolution (United Nations Publications, 2018).

In order to guarantee this fundamental right, places of culture are challenged to repropose their resources in an accessible and comprehensible way to a wide variety of possible users with different needs and expectations (Falk, 2016; Sarraf & Bruno, 2013).

The transition from a merely conservative approach – intended as protection and safeguarding – to an active and engaging perspective has opened the door to the topics of inclusiveness and accessibility, giving a new social role to cultural institutions:

The concept of museums and, in general, of cultural heritage is shifting from simple exposition and preservation of the history and traditions of a culture, to that of a participative and inclusive space where culture is not only “consumed”, but also collectively created through the experiences and points of view of the public. (Muscarà & Sani, 2019, p. 245)

Many of these cultural organizations are currently moving towards common objectives to guarantee a fair, open, and autonomous access to the offered resources, also responding to the policies promoted at national and international level. For instance, The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage is a valuable example for the promotion of an integrated and participatory approach to cultural heritage, and the contribution to its adoption across European policies. One of the outcomes of the proposed actions included in the report is the initiative *Heritage. All-Inclusive!*, promoted in the context of the European Heritage Days 2021<sup>1</sup>. Institutions from 50 countries were involved through the organization of more than 70 thousand events such as exhibitions, seminars, and workshops designed for a wide audience.

In this occasion, many actions concerned the removal of barriers (physical, linguistic, cognitive, sensory, cultural, economic or technological) that hinder participation, considering a broader definition of “diversity” (Cetorelli & Guido, 2017; Olivares & Piatak, 2021), determined not only by physical conditions, but also by cultural ones (geographical origin, religious faith, level of education, etc.) and social ones (gender, salary, dietary needs or habits, etc.).

By widening the concept of diversity, new tools and objectives are established to improve the dialogue and relationship between cultural institutions and audience:

Inclusivity and exclusivity are neither abstract nor absolute qualities; they can only be measured according to specific socio-cultural relationships. Key among those is the ideological performance of the museum as exemplified in its collections and programming activities, and by the specific narratives privileged by the museum and shared with specific sub-groups, classes or strata within the population as a whole. Integral to this performance are both the museum's presentation and the visitor's interests, which constitute distinct coordinates within a connecting matrix of culture practices. (Coffee, 2008, p. 271)

Another highly topical aspect is the digitization of cultural heritage (Borowiecki et al., 2016; Fanea-Ivanovici & Pana, 2020) and its fruition through virtual tools and platforms enabled by new technologies (such as virtual reality, augmented reality, additive manufacturing, etc.). While, on the one hand, this approach allows broader access by offering personalized and original experiences - as proven by numerous initiatives during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ginzarly & Srouf, 2022) - on the other hand, it can create new discrimination caused by the digital divide - understood as the gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who do not - reinforcing economic, educational, and social inequalities.

### **The narrative side of universities and higher education institutions**

Cultural sites can be considered not only those with historical, artistic, and architectural value such as museums, archaeological sites, and cities of art, but also contexts for production and transmission of knowledge such as universities, higher education and research institutions (Sebastiani, 2007).

These specific organizations play a complex role as bearers of values that directly affect their communities as people. One of their tasks is to communicate and enhance goals, policies, and practices undertaken for the well-being of all in terms of equality and inclusion, with special attention to vulnerable groups and minorities (Jucevičienė et al., 2018).

In particular, the so-called University Third Mission seeks to transfer knowledge outside academic environments to create a social, cultural, and economic impact:

All third mission actions are carried out in the belief that the prerequisite for the socio-economic development and growth of a region is the ability to trigger 'virtuous co-evolutionary circles' between research, education, technology, business, and services, thus, fostering the enhancement of the intangibles represented by the social capital of a region (e.g., culture, traditions, environment, lifestyle, social inclusion, and cohesion). (Frondizi et al., 2019, p. 23)

Hence, the success of the objectives dictated by the Third Mission is not only defined by the direct actions undertaken by the university in benefit of its external context, but also by its ability to narrate its results to the stakeholders and the general public.

Among the various storytelling tools available to convey messages and values, merchandising is gaining consideration and interest. It can be found in all cultural contexts that aim to disseminate knowledge also beyond the direct interaction with the visitor. Merchandising – intended as a system of useful products, bearers of meaning – is one of the elements constituting the institutional image Fig. 1.

It conveys a message rooted in the institutional identity, consisting of cultural heritage, mission, and values. This message is then delivered to an audience that establishes a relationship with the institution, influenced by the perceived value that stimulates a sense of belonging or identification.

We can talk about the rise of a more entrepreneurial vision within higher education institutions:

Marketing and merchandising can be seen as specific entrepreneurial ventures carried out by universities to reposition their reputation around the world, a way to expand connections with external stakeholders, to approach new market demands and, in terms of future perspectives, to become students' first choice; in other words, to distinguish themselves from competitors, just like enterprises do. (Fantauzzi et al., 2019, p. 5).

In addition to its undeniable relevance from a communication and marketing point of view, the merchandising object also has a strong symbolic value. If in the museum context it is a tangible witness of the visit, allowing to evoke and extend the memory, in the university context it assumes a dual significance: for internal users, it becomes the emblem of an experience prolonged in time, influenced by the sense of belonging and identification (Gambardella, 2019), while for external users, it represents an element that contains the university's values.

## Methodology

The presented work is part of a doctoral research focused on the enhancement of communication through new processes and strategies for the development and distribution of dedicated merchandising in university and polytechnic environment.

The exploratory analysis (Yin, 2017) aimed to identify virtuous examples of universities' integrated communication and merchandising strategies, with a particular emphasis on the ability to communicate their cultural heritage, mission, and values. It was carried out with the profiling of 150 universities (50 Italian, 50 European, and 50 extra-European). The selection of case studies was based on a geographical distribution criterion with a first focus on the Italian context, gradually expanding the scale of the investigation to a global level. The intent was to select a wide variety of institutions with high reputation and transversal research areas, exploiting university rankings such as the QS World University Ranking. Unfortunately, in some cases, no information could be found on the presence or absence of university merchandising initiatives. For this reason, universities that did not activate or promote documented activities were not included in the mapping.

All the included information was obtained from the official channels of the various universities (website, social profiles, publications) and, for the Italian cases, from online journalistic articles.

The goal was the definition of a map of different strategies, merchandising products, and communication languages, identifying peculiarities and common approaches to the enhancement of cultural heritage and institutional identity. The profile of each university was structured compiling a three-level analysis: university context, merchandising system, and products Fig. 2.

The first level summarizes the main characteristics of the analysed university, with a focus on the identity elements that become the content of the narrative through merchandising. In par-

ticular, it reports: year of foundation and motto (important for measuring the history of the institution through past and future anniversaries), type of institution (recognizing different communication choices between public and private ones), schools and faculties (identifying key disciplines of teaching and research, and the possible presence of internal resources with design and management skills related to merchandising), visual identity (as a fundamental element for recognizable institutional communication through graphic and chromatic choices), and cultural heritage (as a generative element of the narrative starting from the presence of locations and historical architecture, links with the city and/or territorial context, references to works of value and affiliations with other institutions, illustrious lecturers and alumni, etc.).

The second level covers the merchandising system related to the management of development, production, and distribution of goods, analysing merchandising objectives, product categories (clothing, accessories, stationery, gift items, typical foods), sales channels and distribution, purchasing facilities, sales management, use of proceeds (when declared).

The third level focuses on specific merchandising items and collections with their tangible and intangible qualities - such as materials, production chain, possible certifications, co-branding actions, collaborations with local organizations - and all the aspects that make them bear values. Through a semiotic and content analysis of the objects (Muratovski, 2016), it was possible to identify when the communication strategies consciously used elements of the university identity: by defining relevant categories, it became clear which elements were emphasized and which audiences were addressed Fig. 3.

### **Communicate university values through merchandising: some examples**

The results of the exploratory analysis led to the definition of different categories of content conveyed by merchandising, highlighting which messages are preferred in university institutional communication Fig. 4. Heritage-related narratives remain the main theme used to emphasize competitive differentiation and the definition of a historical identity that is synonymous with prestige and quality, in accordance with the concept of heritage university (Lombardi, 2015).

From the values point of view, universities privilege aspects linked to distinctiveness - through the reproduction of motto, coats of arms, identity graphic signs, institutional colours - and those linked to environmental sustainability, often involving the promotion of virtuous behaviours and the reuse of resources. Despite a growing diffusion of initiatives related to inclusion and accessibility, the research has shown that the desire to communicate these university core values has not fully expressed yet its potential through merchandising products, finding only a few representative examples, strongly influenced by their cultural contexts. The identified case studies are consciously developed and effectively communicated through collections or single products, linked to important topics such as multiculturalism, body positivity, gender equality, women's empowerment, and integration of ethnic minorities.

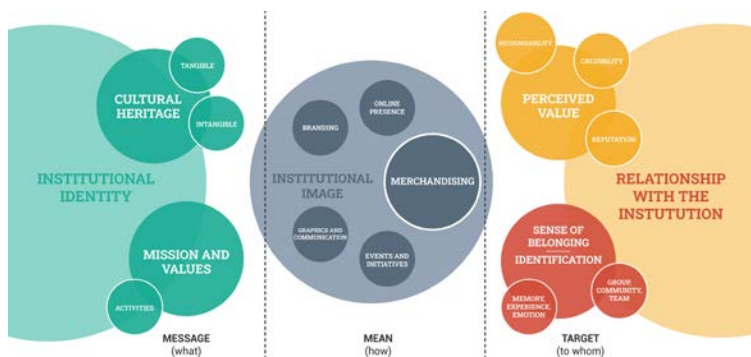


Fig. 1

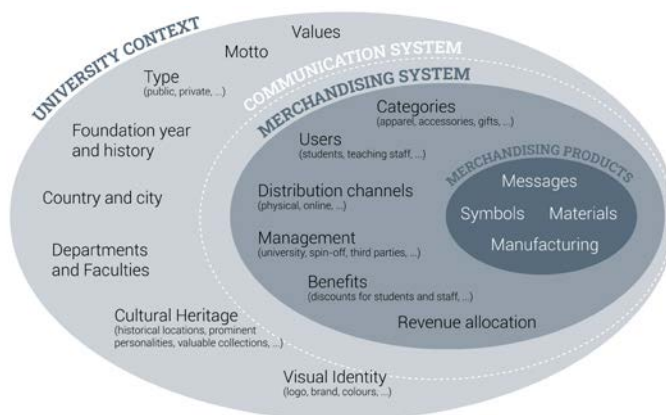


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 1  
The role of merchandising  
in institutional communication. Credits: Authors.

Fig. 2  
Levels of analysis defined  
during case study profiling. Credits: Authors.

Fig. 3  
Categorisation of themes  
emerged during the semi-otic  
analysis of merchandising  
products. Credits: Authors.



Specifically, two main attitudes were identified Fig. 5. In some cases, the university recognizes itself as an active player promoting internal initiatives aimed at its community (students, lecturers, etc.). The first approach can be seen in the merchandising collections of Free University of Bolzano (Italy), University of Basilicata (Italy), KTH - Royal Institute of Technology (Sweden), and The University of Queensland (Australia).

In the Italian context, the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, founded in 1997 with the motto “Trilingual and intercultural”, adopts an interesting approach. Its strong multicultural identity, also fostered by the partnership with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, is expressed with coherence and uniformity in the official product line<sup>2</sup> that enhances the territorial context without limiting the universality of the message. In fact, the unisex clothing and the presence of the three official languages on objects such as mugs, and kitchen aprons embody the open and multicultural spirit.

Once again, in Italy, the University of Basilicata offers a collection of unisex clothing linked to body positivity. Sweatshirts and T-shirts bear the motto *I am perfect the way I am*<sup>3</sup>, promoting the inclusion of all sizes and shapes and the acceptance of one’s own body, a theme particularly suitable for the age group of university students.

On gender equality issues, the *Giants*<sup>4</sup> awareness campaign, launched in 2015 and promoted by the Swedish KTH, aims to promote female enrolment in engineering courses through the example of renowned personalities such as Hedy Lamarr (American inventor), Ada Lovelace (English mathematician), and Edith Clarke (American electrical engineer). The initiative, based on communication strategies and events, included the distribution of dedicated merchandising such as cotton shopping bags with the campaign motto “The future is too important to be left to men”.

In the context of integration of ethnic minorities, the example of The University of Queensland in Australia stands out, devoting an entire collection of institutional objects to the theme of reconciliation<sup>5</sup>, confirming its commitment to the Reconciliation Action Plan<sup>6</sup>. The painting *A Guidance Through Time* by Aboriginal artists Casey Coolweel and Kyra Mancktlelow, inspired by the reconciliation between Aboriginal culture and university values through a pattern that recalls the Brisbane River, has become the graphic element that personalizes a wide range of objects including water bottles, ties, and notebooks. The entire collection is produced by a certified indigenous supplier, and the proceeds from sales contribute to scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In other contexts, the university promotes social initiatives carried out by cooperatives and associations that work to contrast discrimination and increase inclusiveness, becoming a strategic partner for the dissemination of these initiatives to a wider public. This second approach can be seen in the merchandising collections of IUAV – University of Venice (Italy), University of Bern (Switzerland), University of Glasgow (UK), and Brown University (USA).

2  
<https://www.unibz.it/it/home/press/unishop>

3  
<https://www.unibastore.com/prodotto/felpa-perfect-the-way-i-am/>

4  
<http://www.kth.se/giants>

5  
<https://uqshop.com.au/collections/rap-a-guidance-through-time>

6  
University’s document of intent aimed to acknowledge the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in higher education through different actions.



The *Malefatte Collection*<sup>7</sup>, proposed by the Italian IUAV, includes bags and pencil cases made of PVC recovered from the advertising banners of Athenaeum events. Each product is a unique piece, made in collaboration with the social cooperative Rio Terà dei Pensieri, which is involved in the rehabilitation of inmates of the men's prison of Santa Maria Maggiore.

The University of Bern is taking part in the international Blue Community project for the responsible use of water, and this commitment is reflected in a specially designed merchandising product. Specifically, the Blue University carafe<sup>8</sup> is made of recycled glass and its production is handled by the Glass Design Competence Centre, a social integration initiative for the training of unemployed people.

Social engagement related to issues of inclusion and women's empowerment were promoted by the University of Glasgow through a partnership with the charity Chifundo & Chanasa, by selling a collection of shoulder bags, made from recycled denim and chitenji fabric by women in Malawi. The proceeds helped fund scholarships enabling the most talented girls in Malawi to attend medical school.

Of interest is the *Brown makes a difference*<sup>9</sup> initiative of Brown University, which offers several collections of products created through partnerships with social cooperatives that help different vulnerable groups. These include *Think I Knit*, a project that makes and sells beanies knitted by single mothers who have difficulty finding steady work to support themselves, and *Extreme Needlepoint*, a community-based non-profit organization that employs new artisans in Puerto Rico and supports their training.

## The role of design and possible future developments

Within the field of enhancing and promoting cultural sites through merchandising, the role of design is to develop useful products that are highly narrative, consistent to the context and cultural system, bearer of a clear and shareable message. An in-depth knowledge of the institution, its potential, its social commitments, and its territorial network is required to prevent these products from becoming a mere marketing strategy, detached from the actual university's values. As the case studies above show, merchandising is not just an end itself, but a means of communication justified by the institution's commitments and actions, becoming witness and narrator through its material and immaterial characteristics. Therefore, its value becomes more authentic when the choices made in terms of design and communication correspond to the message that the university wishes to communicate (for example, through a thoughtful selection of materials, production partners, environmental and social impact).

As a consequence of the analytical work based on existing collections and objects, the initial results confirm the importance of the variety of cultural and geographical context considered for the preliminary selection of case studies: in English-speaking countries and the Far East, for example, associations of students are actively involved in promoting the university and managing the merchandising processes. This participation is not influenced by the presence of design courses, as the valorisation of research in all its fields is a sufficient reference point for ad hoc products, usually realised by external partners.

7  
<https://malefattevenezia.it/en/category/iuav-en/>

8  
[https://www.unibe.ch/university/portrait/self\\_image/sustainability/blue\\_university/carafes/index](https://www.unibe.ch/university/portrait/self_image/sustainability/blue_university/carafes/index)

9  
<https://insite.brown-textbook.com/SiteText?id=61366>

### Monica Oddone

Ecodesigner interested in cultural heritage, institutional valorisation, material, and territorial culture. She is currently a PhD student with a research project on the enhancement of polytechnic identity through merchandising.

### Marco Bozzola

Associate professor in Design at Politecnico di Torino, where he teaches Concept Design and Design for Cultural Heritage at the bachelor degree in Design and Communication. His research field is design for crafts and territory, design for cultural heritage and packaging design.

### Claudia De Giorgi

Full professor of Design at Politecnico di Torino. Her research field is the sustainable innovation in products, processes, and materials. Head of MATto, innovative materials archive open to SMEs, and of national and international research projects on this topic.

Fig. 4



Fig. 4  
Quantitative distribution of merchandising products in the identified themes. Credits: Authors.

Fig. 5

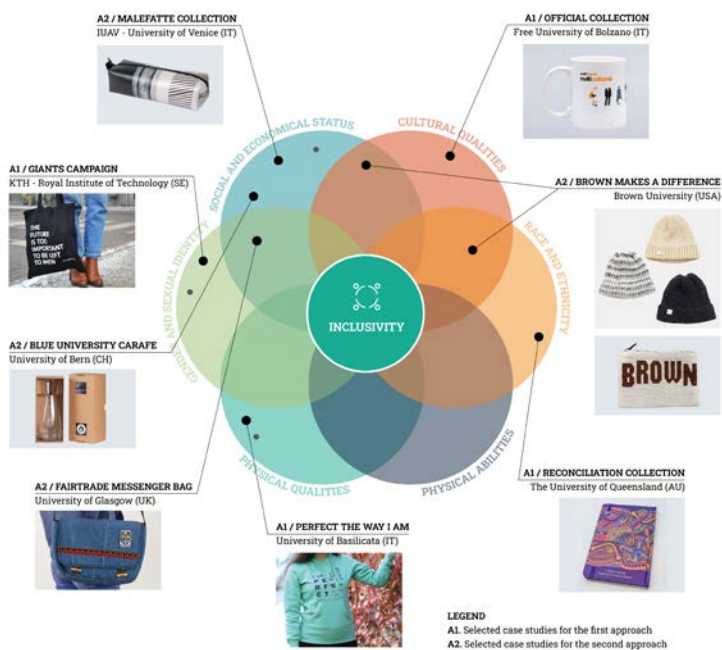


Fig. 5  
Mapping inclusive merchandising in worldwide universities: selected case studies. Credits: Authors.

Similarly, the initiatives described above in promoting inclusion and accessibility result from the attention that each university pays to the needs and the specificities of the population and the territory in which it is located, by demonstrating its commitment through specific initiatives.

After the development of a graphical tool useful for the case studies analysis, the next research step concerns the definition of guidelines that will result in a practical toolkit to support design of inclusive and representative merchandising products for universities, cultural institutions, and beyond. These guidelines will also aim to measure the accessibility content of the products currently distributed and sold, and will provide all the concerned parties (designers, communication and marketing executives) with an important resource for assessing any integration or redesign actions.

## References

- Borowiecki, K. J., Forbes, N., & Fresa, A. (Eds.). (2016). *Cultural Heritage in a Changing World* (1st ed.). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29544-2>
- Cetorelli, G. & Guido, M. R. (Eds.) (2017), *Il patrimonio culturale per tutti. Fruibilità, riconoscibilità, accessibilità [Cultural heritage for all. Usability, recognisability, accessibility]*. Quaderni della valorizzazione NS4, Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività culturali e del Turismo, Direzione Generale Musei.
- Coffee, K. (2008). Cultural inclusion, exclusion and the formative roles of museums. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 23(3), 261–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647770802234078>
- Council of Europe. (2021, September 8). *European Heritage Days 2021 celebrate "Heritage: All Inclusive!"* Retrieved 8 February 2022, from <https://go.coe.int/4Frdx>
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, (2019). *European framework for action on cultural heritage*, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/949707>
- Falk, J. (2016). Museum audiences: A visitor-centered perspective. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 39(3), 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07053436.2016.1243830>
- Fanea-Ivanovici, M., & Pana, M. C. (2020). From Culture to Smart Culture. How Digital Transformations Enhance Citizens' Well-Being Through Better Cultural Accessibility and Inclusion. *IEEE Access*, 8, 37988–38000. <https://doi.org/10.1109/access.2020.2975542>
- Fantauzzi, C., Frondizi, R., Colasanti, N., & Fiorani, G. (2019). Creating Value in the Entrepreneurial University: Marketization and Merchandising Strategies. *Administrative Sciences*, 9(4), 82.
- Frondizi, R., Fantauzzi, C., Colasanti, N., & Fiorani, G. (2019). The Evaluation of Universities' Third Mission and Intellectual Capital: Theoretical Analysis and Application to Italy. *Sustainability*, 11(12), 3455. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11123455>
- Gambardella, C. (2019). Merchandising: dal museo all'università [Merchandising: from museum to university]. In D. Russo & P. Tamborini (edited by), *Design&Territori* (pp. 155–169). New Digital Frontiers. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci9040082>
- Ginzarly, M., & Jordan Srour, F. (2022). Cultural heritage through the lens of COVID-19. *Poetics*, 92, 101622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2021.101622>
- Jucevičienė, P., Vizgirdaitė, J., & Alexander, H. (2018). Accessibility and Inclusion in Higher Education: Implementing International Imperatives in National and Institutional Contexts. *Pedagogika*, 130(2), 46–63. <https://doi.org/10.15823/p.2018.21>
- Lombardi, R. (2015). *Heritage university. Comunicazione e memoria degli atenei [Heritage university. Communication and memory of universities]*. (1st ed.). Aracne.
- Muratovski, G. (2016). *Research for Designers: A Guide to Methods and Practice* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Muscarà, M., & Sani, C. (2019). Accessibility to Cultural Heritage, some project outcomes. *EDUCATION SCIENCES AND SOCIETY*, 1, 244–280. <https://doi.org/10.3280/ess1-2019oa7701>
- Olivares, A., & Piatak, J. (2021). Exhibiting Inclusion: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Museum Participation. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 33(1), 121–133. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00322-0>
- Sarraf, V. P., & Bruno, M. C. O. (2013). Cultural Heritage, Participation and Access. *Museum International*, 65(1-4), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12031>
- Sebastiani, C. (2007). *La politica delle città [The policy of cities]*. Il Mulino.
- United Nations Publications. (2018). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

The 8th International Forum of Design as a Process, themed “Disrupting Geographies in the Design World” was held in Bologna from 20 to 22 June 2022. The event was organised by the Advanced Design Unit of the Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Department of Architecture, in collaboration with two partner universities: Tecnológico de Monterrey (TEC) and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

The Forum engaged speakers from the Global Design community, expanding the original vocation of the Latin Network for the Development of Design as a Process to include researchers and designers of the Mediterranean Area, Middle East, IOR (Indian Ocean Region), and Global South regions. The goal was to share new perspectives on imagining design futures in a responsible and just perspective, at the forefront of change, while building strategic partnerships and creating accessible knowledge.

Structured around three pillars — seminars, workshops, and exhibitions — the Forum hosted meetings, reflection opportunities, networking activities. It involved designers, scholars, young researchers, design entrepreneurs, in an experimental format.

Speakers’ contributions not only inspired the practices of the designers’ community, but also resonated with students and the broad audiences. The presentations explored intersections of materiality and culture, post-coloniality, decoloniality, gender studies, and other areas of human thought and action which seek to analyse, question and challenge the disruptive geographies in the world, today.

The papers submitted to the five tracks proposed are published in the Digital Special Issue 1 of *diid. disegno industriale – industrial design*, celebrating during those days its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and serving as the fourth partner of the event.

## The Editors

Erik Ciravegna, Elena Formia, Valentina Gianfrate,  
Andreas Sicklinger, Michele Zannoni

DSI No. 1 — 2023

Year XXI

ISSN 1594-8528

ISSN Online 2785-2245

ISBN Online 979-12-5477-329-1

**DIGITAL  
SPECIAL  
ISSUE**  
**1**



**Bologna**  
University Press