

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

---

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with  
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID  
An ICSID initiative of the IDA.

**Claudio Germak, Claudia De Giorgi [claudio.germak@polito.it; claudia.degiorgi@polito.it]  
Politecnico di Torino, DIPRADI, Italy**

## DESIGN FOR TYPICAL CRAFTS

### Abstract

The research leads to reflect upon the strategic and sustainable role of design to support local production systems. Specifically, it presents action regarding Typical Crafts in Piedmont, where some craftsmen' communities have passed over traditions, skills and material cultures for years, despite the few occasions in terms of innovation, popularity and market, for their own work.

According to this, the research aims at being the starting point to know, promote and reflect up some possible ways to "create a system" between Crafts, Territory, Community and Design.

Design, that could be a new way to "connect" them, is the underlying theme of a story developing through examples that have meant to enhance traditions (languages fit for local materials), skills (product quality) and actions in the production chain.

In some cases, the collaboration between Craftsmen's communities and designers is producing exportable models to re-organise processes and re-design products – other examples study the integration and the synergy between cultures and movements in favour of sustainability (product and food, product and cultural heritage, ...); others, offer environmental-friendly solutions for the manufacture process.

Some products are interesting for they result from some "unclosed" (we all know how craftsmen prefer independency) project, which are presented as a sort of "guide lines" that Communities could interpret freely, always in accordance with some shared rules: sustainable production protocols and markets where consumers are directly involved in cultural actions.

So that the first one to require typical craft products is the territory itself: bars and restaurants, administration communities' offices, and shops selling typical products, such as food, could opt for these new products and promote them as well.

Consumers may take part in ordinary institutional, commercial and cultural (fairs, festivals, exhibitions) events, but also in experimental actions:

ITINERANT LECTURES, itinerant workshops in several regional tourist spots, during summertime. The Communities will travel through the region thus involving people into their own crafts activity, by showing materials, work processes and products;

OPEN SHOPS, where the production place may provide a chance to organize cultural events and present new product lines.

SERVICE CENTERS, Institutions supporting the Craftsmen Communities' activities with targeted training sessions on sustainable technology update, business assistance, marketing and promotion. Some more experienced Communities were provided an assistance service to manage and start up service centres for typical crafts, where these action lines are developed and integrated.

REGIONAL ECOMUSEUMS, there are 25 in Piedmont present, and they were created to promote local heritage and material culture. Some of them actively collaborate with Typical Crafts Communities.

Some of the activities within Piedmont region are listed here below:

- **Valle Varaita**. From the new lines of wood furniture, manufactured on the base of the old transalpine furniture to the creation of a Service Center for light woodworking sector.

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

- **Mondovì.** New product lines fit for typical local ceramic: starting from the classical example of the earthenware plate, some possible indications to update the product and the market too.
- **Valli di Lanzo.** From the research on chestnut wood, local species, to the guide lines to manufacture products consisting of the several materials used in the Community: wood, stone, wrought steel.
- **Twerghi Alessi.** Small steel and wood objects for the kitchen and the table, whose design was slightly modified, and produced by the craftsmen Communities from some alpine valleys in Piedmont and successfully marketed by an important company.
- **Munlab-Fornace Carena.** The research on materials starts from the clay, which is firstly worked and then placed in old ovens, to get to the activities promoted by the Ecomuseum.
- **Bab Anmil.** Italian designers and Moroccan craftsmen: an intercultural research re-elaborating languages by restoring old Moroccan working techniques.
- **Castellamonte.** The timeless expressiveness and the technique of the remarkable ceramic stoves that have been produced in Castellamonte since the XVII century is the reference point for future projects.
- **Valenza.** Examples between tradition and innovation in artisan jewellery making: rapid prototyping, sustainable making procedures and study on expressive patterns within the integration of materials.

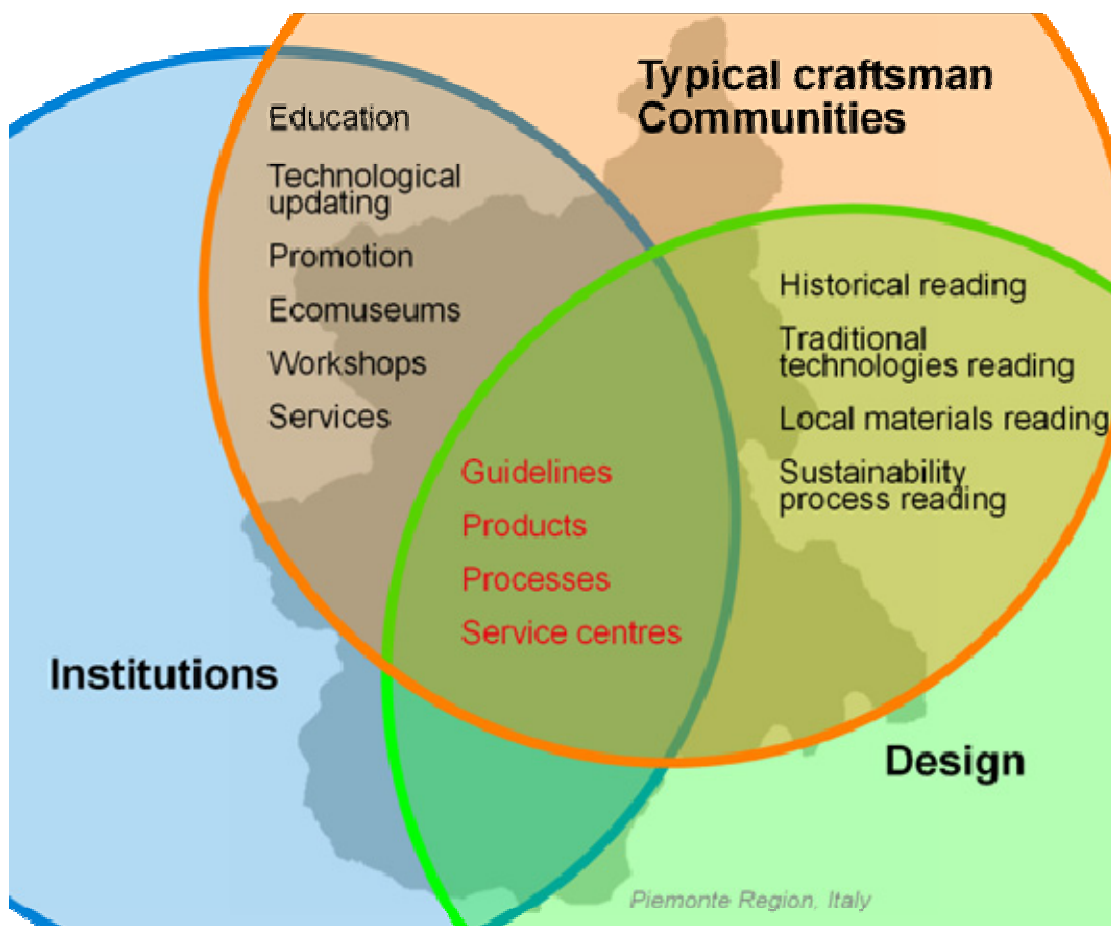


Fig. 1: Scheme of the approach