

Maria Pia Pozzato

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# Visual and Linguistic Representations of Places of Origin

An Interdisciplinary Analysis

# Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy & Psychology

Volume 16

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# Visual and Linguistic Representations of Places of Origin

An Interdisciplinary Analysis

 Springer

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this volume to my daughter, Ada Nifosì, who is just starting her research path as an archaeologist, and to the memory of my teacher Umberto Eco with whom I started my own research path and who will always inspire my work.

Maria Pia Pozzato

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# Introduction

**Maria Pia Pozzato**

**Abstract** The research is focused on the representations, both visual and linguistic, which people give of their own places of origin. The factual work of collection of the texts was not merely “empirical” because all the members of the research group proceeded in a predetermined way, following a protocol carefully and preliminarily discussed. In other words, we have made a list of the most relevant questions to address in the analysis of the corpus in order to obtain the answers we are looking for. Some of those answers concern: (1) how the visual language and the oral language integrate each other in the reconstruction of a memory; (2) how people nowadays experience the memory of their places of origin, in an era marked by large displacements and diminished sense of belonging to a place; (3) how emotional and cognitive components work together in the reconstruction of the past; (4) how the past is expressed through its spatial dimension. Interviewees were asked to draw their own place of origin on a white A3 sheet, using either a pencil or a coloured pen, according to their choice. If they did not remember their native place precisely because they had moved away many years before, they could draw the place they remembered as the scenario of their early childhood. The team is formed by scholars from different disciplines such as Semiotics, Psychology and Geography, because we aimed at understanding the materials under investigation from various and interdisciplinary points of view.

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## Note on Images

The authors of the drawings who signed them have given us permission to publish them, as well as other material connected to their places of origin, they later provided (photos, relatives’ maps, social network pages etc.). The publication of images from Google Maps and Street View abide by the restrictions laid down by Google Inc. (<https://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html>). For other images, the copyright owner and the terms of permission will be specified each time.

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## 1 Genesis of a Research Project

Every research project is primarily a human event,<sup>1</sup> it begins with a personal story. Here I want to recount the circumstances that have led to this particular work and to describe the group of scholars that made this possible. In 2013 I taught a course on the semiotics of urban space at the University of Bologna. While teaching it I realized that a high percentage of my students were foreign and came from various countries in Europe and beyond. I became curious about the environment they originated from, so I asked them to draw maps of their place of origin. By place of origin I did not mean where they spent their childhood, but where they were from. The responses were very different and contained many beautiful drawings, but what caught my attention above all was the deep interest with which the students responded. Later, the drawings became the inspiration for all kinds of stories that my students started to tell and which gave expression to various opinions, emotions, personal, historical and social information connected with their place of origin.

Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote that the geologist must be able to understand the importance of a datum beyond the evidence it provides within the heterogeneous mass of perceptive data<sup>2</sup>; a faded line on the ground, which to an untrained observer may appear irrelevant, can be the faint trace of a hugely important event, such as the encounter of two oceans. As a semiologist who studies phenomena of signification, when I got the results of this small experiment I glimpsed my “faded line” that could potentially lead to interesting developments. Since these drawings provoked such a variety of emotions, interests and further discourses, I thought it worthwhile to look for further “core samples” in order to obtain increasingly complex information. It was then necessary to focalize the point of view by stimulating the connections between the subjects of the research and the place they were asked to represent. When I looked closely at the drawings of my students I realized that several of them had drawn their place of origin as you would a simple postcard, while others – particularly those that had to leave their place of origin to settle in Italy – had drawn what one could call the place of their soul connected to childhood memories and their roots. Hence, I understood that the most promising, and most meaningful, approach for the people concerned, was asking students to reconstruct the first place they could remember, the place that was, so to speak, born along with them, and where, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote, they *opened themselves* to the world for the first time (Merleau-Ponty 1945). I thought that in relation to the environment in which we live the place of origin is like our mother tongue in relation to linguistic communication; or, using an expression taken from Merleau-Ponty, the first “*être à ...*” that represents an integral part of our deep identity as human beings among other human beings.

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<sup>1</sup>“Scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all. To understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups that create and use it.” Kuhn 1969, p.174.

<sup>2</sup>“Tout paysage se présente d’abord comme un immense désordre qui laisse libre de choisir le sens qu’on préfère lui donner.” (Lévi-Strauss 1955, p. 60)

Later, while teaching another course to postgraduate students in Semiotics, I thought of repeating the same experiment, this time, though, I openly asked them to draw their childhood places. These students were at a more advanced level of education—they were writing their own Ph.D theses—which it made possible to have long conversations about their drawings and its semiotic and philosophical implications. The project also raised the interest of these students; some were so keen on this experiment that they ended up collaborating<sup>3</sup> in the analysis of *case studies* connected with the topic and their work is now part of this volume.

The postgraduate course included a limited number of students and this made possible the realization of in-depth analyses. In particular, the students and I thought it was a good idea to compare the drawings with the satellite images of the same territory from *Google Maps* and *Street View*. The motive was less about evaluating the drawings in relation to their accuracy, but in order to single out and comment on the most obvious infidelities and the motivations behind them. This approach turned out to be particularly interesting as it showed the strongly subjective character of the graphic reconstructions: when compared to the satellite maps, it became clear that the drawings included examples of extensions, reductions, elisions and additions. These were not examples of inaccurate representations, but of reinterpretations of those places based on the subjects' personal experiences. And yet, satellite maps have become the normal way in which we orient ourselves or we mentally reconstruct the space so much so that when we asked students to make the drawings, we also recommended they did not use their *laptop computers* or mobile phones to access maps available on internet. In relation to this specific issue, we asked the semiotician Federico Montanari to be part of this project. Montanari, an expert of *self mapping*, explored the influence of geo-positioning devices in shaping our perception of territory (Montanari 2014, 2015). This issue was particularly significant for our research project, since the majority of the subjects we interviewed were young and consequently digitally astute.

The graphic characteristics of the maps encouraged me to show them to two of my geographer colleagues at the University of Bologna: Alessandra Bonazzi and Emanuele Frixia. I immediately realized that their collaboration was essential to understanding which cartographical models our subjects used most frequently in order to provide a visual reconstruction of their places of origin and whether they were aware of their borrowings. The very first drawings had already shown that the cultural aspect was of main importance: the maps were not significant as traces or results of emotional automatisms, but as products of a complex semiotic process characterized by heterogeneous cultural codes and modes of expression. And yet, feelings could not be overlooked. So while the semioticians and the geographers were focusing attention on the relevant questions of cultural backgrounds and languages of expression, I began to believe it was also necessary to involve a psychologist to complement these analyses, thereby providing an insight on the relevant emotional and cognitive dynamics. Our group welcomed at this point Giulia Mazzeo, a young scholar and psychotherapist who has undertaken research involv-

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<sup>3</sup>Enzo D'Armenio, Paola Donatiello, Margherita Murgiano and Giulia Nardelli.

ing drawing as therapy.<sup>4</sup> The choice of a professional figure that was not just an academic but also a practitioner was important to safeguard the *experimental* character of this project. In actual fact, we did not know exactly what we were going to find out. As happens in psychotherapy, it was only during the process of our *controlled interactions* with the subjects (whose modalities will be illustrated later in this introduction), that the most important results emerged. Only then, in turn, were we able to trace our own map of the different representations of places of origin.<sup>5</sup>

Little by little the outline of our final project started to take shape. This was an interdisciplinary project: even though the book is largely a semiotic volume, it introduces other approaches in order to provide a more comparative and more rounded perspective. As with all interdisciplinary projects, there were some risks concerning methodological consistency. Nevertheless, as Michel Serres has noted in his most recent essay, significantly entitled *Le gaucher boiteux* (“the left-handed and lame person”, Serres 2015), the strict application of a method will rarely lead to the discovery of something new whereas a renowned philosophical tradition teaches us to use narrative to produce concrete reflections. In our case, though we have tried to avoid serendipity, we made an effort to “listen to” all the verbal-visual texts we gathered, and tried to understand them from our different points of view. As the linguist François Rastier has noted in his book on corpus linguistics, when one approaches a group of texts it is often the case that one does not find what one is looking for, but rather something one was not looking for at all, or else one remains anchored to the bias of the most widely accepted theory. But, he concludes, a critical attitude can overcome these limitations.<sup>6</sup> The same can be held true for future developments in several other disciplines, such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, sociology and linguistics.<sup>7</sup>

## 2 Corpus and Main Issues

Some aspects of this research needs to be clear from the very beginning; the unifying thread throughout the volume is the question asked to each interviewee, that is “Can you draw a sort of map of your place of origin?” and the fact that we discussed and established all together the modalities of the data collection process and respected them in the process itself. During the following phase of analysis, we shared the corpus material, but not everything; there was only a partial overlap. The more theoretical approaches also relied on at least a part of the maps collected, so we grouped the essays according to their varying levels of generality. In the first part of the

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<sup>4</sup>Mazzeo has studied in the Scuola Bolognese di Psicoterapia Cognitiva (SBPC), that is part of the European Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapy (EABCT).

<sup>5</sup>This pragmatic approach explains the inclusion of this volume in the present series.

<sup>6</sup>See “Introduction” by the author to Rastier 2011.

<sup>7</sup>See for example the Charlotte Linde and William Labov’s works which connect the study of language and thought to the spatial networks (1975).

volume, the reader can find three contributions which furnish a theoretical framework about maps, place of origin, and identity. In particular, these works talk about the underlying cultural models which have inspired the collected drawings. In the second part, there is a case study dedicated to two maps, collected by Paola Donatiello, and authored by two twin girls. In the third part there are five papers, inspired by different disciplines, which are dedicated to a more in-depth analysis of the dataset. Their authors took into account specific maps within the dataset that represented meaningful examples related to the themes they were investigating (see Sect. 4). My own essay attempted a classification of invariants within the entire corpus of drawings, and as such is the longest contribution at the end of the volume.

The subjects involved, due to the specific circumstances, mainly included university students. The maps collected in various universities totalled more than two hundred. But a minority of the subjects involved were university teachers, a few patients of the psychologist Giulia Mazzeo, some deaf people whose maps have been studied by Margherita Murgiano, and the adolescent twins mentioned above. The majority of the maps were collected by myself at the University of Bologna, at the University La Sapienza in Rome and at the University of Oregon<sup>8</sup>; about 30 maps by Federico Montanari at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and at the Udine and Pordenone Consorzio Universitario (Isia-Design); and a few maps by Enzo D'Armenio at the Université de Liège. All the maps that have been gathered have been scanned and distributed to all members of the research team. Some maps drawn by adults from various walks of life are also part of this corpus; these have been compared with those of the students. However, these are not numerous enough to be a particular representative case study.<sup>9</sup>

From a statistical point of view the better-represented social group is that of university students. This could be considered as a limit, further complicated by the heterogeneity with which the universities involved have been chosen due to our teaching and research commitments. However, concerning the latter aspect, the overall project appears rather homogenous as in the end the subjects involved shared certain similarities: in Oregon, as in Liege, Bologna and in Reggio Emilia a high percentage of maps were drawn by students that come from outside Italy.<sup>10</sup> The maps drawn by Italian students, moreover, cover the whole national territory, as

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<sup>8</sup>My thanks to Isabella Pezzini (Università La Sapienza di Roma) and Regina Psaki (Oregon University, Eugene) who kindly allowed me to carry out this survey in their classes.

<sup>9</sup>In the following paragraphs of this introduction I will comment in details on each individual chapter that make up this collection.

<sup>10</sup>These are just some of the non-Italian localities represented in this survey: Albania – Bashkia Durrës; Argentina- Buenos Aires (Belgrano); Argentina- Caleta Olivia; Belgium-Tervuren; Belgium-Gant; Belgium-Liège; Brazil-Curitiba; Brazil-Fortaleza; California-Live Oak (US); California-San Rafael (US); Cameroon- Youndé; Colorado- Denver; Germany- Bruchsal; Greece-Lesvos; Iran -Teheran (Mara); Moldavia-Bardar; Poland- Konskie; Rep. Santo Domingo-Santo Domingo (Simon Bolivar district); Romania- Bucharest; Romania- Onesti; Russia-Moscow; Spain, Canary Islands-Las Canteras; Spain- Murcia; Syria-Idlib; Turkey- Ankara; Alaska- Paxon (US); Missouri- Freemar (US); New York- Niskayuna (US); Ontario- Walworth (US); Oregon-Corvallis (US); Oregon, Eugene (US); Oregon- Oregon City (US); Oregon- Portland (US).



several students – in the university of Bologna and Rome in particular – come from outside the university city. Overall, the subjects involved have represented a homogeneous sample as far as age and education are concerned, but a diversified one in regard to geographical provenance – and this is only in small part due to the fact that the research was undertaken also in the USA. Nowadays university students are increasingly cosmopolitan, but it would be misleading to conclude that globalization has erased any cultural differences. At the same time, it is not possible to say that Polish students draw their place of origin in a certain way and students of Cameroon in another way based on only a few cases. What we can claim – without any pretence of generalization – is that some common elements recur in maps made by students of different nationalities but, conversely, that some cultural specificities also arise. For example, several students of various nationalities, who at the time of this study lived in a place different from the one of their origin, tended to connect their place of origin with the one in which they were staying. In other words, in their drawing or their commentary (and sometimes in both) the authors have often given voice to a positive or negative *polarization* between two places connected with their identity. An example of cultural specificity is provided by those students that attended high school in the USA; these have a more advanced cartographical culture than the other students, hence their maps were almost professional.

Another important methodological point is the difference between our research and a classical ethnographic/sociological one. It was evident that this was a descriptive research work, and therefore not focused on causality. Classical studies on ethnographic methodology<sup>11</sup> make a distinction between surveys of objective phenomena and those of subjective ones. This study belongs to the second category because its aim is not to study actual behaviours or behavioural intentions, or to make predictions, but rather to describe beliefs, opinions, perceptions, judgements, prejudices, stereotypes, emotions and feelings connected to one's childhood place mostly in an age in which the experience of migration, change of profession, and cultural hybridity influence people's lives from their very first years. The initial question we have asked ourselves was: how do people, who work or study in a different city or State from the one they were born in, perceive and represent their place of origin? How do various media devices now omnipresent in our lives influence our perception and our ways of representing personal lived experience; do they weaken our sense of place? We were interested in understanding to what degree identity that is shaped during childhood could encourage, or discourage or pre-determine, a relationship with a wider environment, while also avoiding a dramatic fragmentation. The issues involved go well beyond the circumscribed aim of this study and involve aspects of so-called globalization that represent one the great challenges that humanity has to face in the present time.

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<sup>11</sup> See Oppenheim 1992; Fowler 1993, 1995.

### 3 Methodology

The members of the team collected the maps in different spatial-temporal circumstances so, in order to achieve a comparable corpus, it was necessary that everyone followed the same data collection process.<sup>12</sup> The research group met several times and eventually agreed on a satisfactory protocol to follow. The first factor to consider was the *setting* in which to gather maps. We noted that if we asked “please, make a drawing of your place of origin”, we received general drawings mostly of domestic environments, pets, toys, etc. If the question was “please, draw a map of your place of origin”, we received something very similar to street maps. What we wanted was neither of these, but rather a representation of a wider and more articulated space than domestic settings, which was also a representational reconstruction of personal memories. According to the famous French semiotician Louis Marin, who has studied maps in painting,<sup>13</sup> utopias have a geographical nature and representations of space provide the possibility to explore social relations and moral codes, as well as political and economical systems. In our case, if the subjects involved had provided a mere verbal recounting of the places and events that marked their childhood, they would have ended up producing a series of stereotyped anecdotes. Instead, they were asked to tell a tale with images focusing attention on the spatial environment; in other words they were asked to provide what for them represented an unusual reconstruction through a code they did not control fully. Moreover, in the attempt to recall and organize a representation of space on a piece of paper, the authors of the maps were more likely to construct a figurative or metaphorical plan whose analysis could yield information that was far from immediately obvious and that the authors of the maps were not fully conscious of. The authors’ graphic skills have represented an important factor in their mapping: students of design from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia have drawn very different maps from all the other students – though this does not mean that these are characterized by heightened significations.<sup>14</sup> In the process of analyzing the maps, we have not focused merely on the referential aspect (i.e. X has drawn roads and blocks of flats; or Y has drawn mountains, animals etc.); what was much more important was *how* things were represented, i.e. the general meaning of a visual discourse that uses space to express emotions and reflections connected with childhood. That places and their physical and social components (Canter 1977) are significant spatial unities filled with meanings is also re-confirmed by studies in psychology, as noted in

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<sup>12</sup>“Good research work is different from bad by the degree of explicitness of its hypothesis; for its explicit declaration about its limitations and the credibility of the results obtained; for the adequacy of the measures used to test hypotheses (the modality of data gathering, the kind of questions asked etc.) and for the adequacy of its data analysis and their presentation.” (Zammamuner 1998, p.46, our translation).

<sup>13</sup>See for example “La ville dans sa carte et son portrait: proposition de recherche” (Marin 1983).

<sup>14</sup>These students sometimes have made use of technical skills to construct a personal expression of their place of origin; in some other cases students’ aim was mainly to do “a nice drawing”, that lacked sincerity and of providing information.

Giulia Mazzeo's essay. Places appear to play a particularly key role in crucial moments in one's life, especially in those cases where someone is forced to leave their place of origin (Feldman 1996). Places connected to childhood are crucial because it is here that the subject's first attachments develop and their first explorations of space occur. It has been theorized that these spaces provide a sort of action schema that will continue more or less unaltered throughout one's life. (Bowlby 1969).

The centrality of spaces, places and maps is more obvious for the third discipline involved in this study, namely geography. It is important here to remember that for a geographer "To ask for a map is to say, 'Tell me a story'" (Turchi 2004). This implies that space, place and memory are inseparable from a story and a representation, or that any map is a projection of self and a mediation of the places belonging to one's culture. Geographical studies focusing on the relationship between space/place and memory have described the public and collective dimension, specifically when attempting to trace the function of narrations and imaginations that have shaped national identities and political constructions and the representations that have given rise to such identities (for a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Johnson and Pratt 2009). More recently geographers have begun to consider this relationship on a larger scale, focusing attention on that narrow and uncertain space that separates public and private memory. Terms such as imagination, emotions, attachment and self have become recurrent in geographic criticism (Dillon 2006; Anderson and Harrison 2010; Pile 2009; Thrift 2008) highlighting that, notwithstanding theoretical differences, the relation between identity and material space along with its meanings are complex intertwining and negotiating present and past, memory and actuality (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012). This hypothesis is reinforced by literary works for which space is not a mere description of a landscape or the account of characters' movement in space; here space often provides the covert organization of the deep meaning of a literary work (Bertrand 1985). This is well illustrated by one of Italo Calvino's short story<sup>15</sup> in which the author tells a story about himself as a child. The episode recounts his father – a botanist – dragging him to the mountains to pick up produce from the family's vegetable patch. The description of the long walk uphill is described in detail, with the sea visible in the distance. It is clear that the narrator resents his father's imposition; he has no interest in plants, because he is convinced that his future lies in the urban environment where language and social relations are. In this short story space provides a grammar of values: for the child-protagonist all that is negative is connected with the present, altitude, the act climbing up, the natural environment, while the future, the plains, the urban environment and the sea represent all that is positive.

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<sup>15</sup> *La strada di San Giovanni* (Calvino 1990) is one of the very rare autobiographical short stories of this writer. For a psychological analysis of the space of this short story, see Fasulo and Palmese 2004.

Returning to the protocol that we have used in our survey, after an initial experimental phase<sup>16</sup> we realized that the best wording to get the kind of drawing we were looking for was, as above shortly mentioned: “Draw the place where you were born or where you have lived in the early years of your life. Draw a sort of map that somewhere includes your house and those spaces which were meaningful for you at that time.” The request to locate the house somewhere was motivated with the need to limit the extension of the representation. Despite the fact that everybody has been free to decide the extension range of the space represented, we wanted to avoid the drawing being restricted to the interior of the house or alternatively that the geographical area represented was so vast that all connections with personal lived experience were consequently lost.<sup>17</sup>

The materials used were very basic: an A3 white piece of paper, pencils, some black and coloured pens, pastels, an eraser for corrections. Only on one occasion did a PhD student ask for a second piece of paper. This confirms the impression that once the subjects had gone “through the looking glass of memory” they became so immersed in the past that they found it impossible to maintain a critical distance from their representations. As Gaston Bachelard has noted, the places in which we have exercised our *rêverie* spontaneously become the object of an further *rêverie*.<sup>18</sup> Everyone has been left free to use the material the way they wanted, so, for example, in the end, not everyone used coloured pens and several students preferred to draw with a pencil or a pen. To counteract performance anxiety, we constantly reminded students that this project was not about artistic skills or realistic drawing; the authors were at times told “draw it as it comes to you, as you remember it”. This allowed some unwelcomed or unexpected lived experiences to re-emerge. To ask people to recount some personal events is a delicate matter; our aim was to get significant material, while, at the same time, avoiding to give the impression that we were intruding in our students’ private lives. The level of intimacy we wanted to achieve was intermediate: neither too personal – similar to an exchange with a psychotherapist – nor too detached – similar to a casual conversation.

Another problematic issue was the process of interpretation of the maps. We soon realized that while some maps were self-explanatory – due to the commentaries by their authors – others were more opaque, obscure as cryptograms even and thus representations that only the author could have interpreted. For this reason, at times it has been necessary to add a note – albeit a brief one – to the drawing. Though we intended to focus on visual and spatial representations, in some cases

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<sup>16</sup>Some might think that the way rules and regulations have been put together is excessively empiric. But, as have been noted by Thomas Kuhn (1969), a paradigm governs a group of scholars and only afterwards a field of study, then it is crucial the effective process of construction of the examples shared by the group.

<sup>17</sup>Despite this, a good part of our subjects have still represented only their own house or very wide geographical areas. These drawings are less significant. On the one hand we have provided fairly precise directions, on the other we did not want to be too imposing, because our aim was to construct a relaxed atmosphere so that people felt relatively free about choices they wanted to adopt for their reconstruction.

<sup>18</sup>See Bachelard 1957, especially chapter 1, dedicated to domestic spaces.

had the author not intervened with a verbal or written comment, the interpretation of the map would have been totally arbitrary. But for a few exceptions, the members of our research group have had the chance to comment briefly on the drawings, adding further information. The time for drawing and commentary did not exceed 30 min and students were not supposed to know in advance about their task. Time was important to prevent subjects preparing their verbal-visual discourses in advance. The surprise element made the emotive response more prominent: there was the emotion both of retracing moments of one's childhood, and the fear of ridicule, or revealing too much about one's private life.<sup>19</sup> After an initial surprise, everyone quickly became absorbed in drawing. The significance of the representations has been reconfirmed by the commentaries: once drawings were completed their authors would gaze at them as if they were old photographs recording images of their lived experience and bringing back people and events from the past. These aspects or fragments of the past gave rise to further memories especially where these maintained a strict relation to reality. Though where the author produced an excessively fantastical map associated with the inspiration of the moment, these lost their evocative power. As Paul Ricoeur remarks, narration moves around the temporal dimension of existence and provides forms for experiences that otherwise would remain chaotic. According to Ricoeur, representation – or *mimesis* – can open new dimensions of reality and this has been confirmed by our survey: once drawn our maps have reactivated the workings of memory (Ricoeur 1983–1985).

Despite the diversity and heterogeneous backgrounds of the subjects involved, and consequently the different places they drew, the factors mentioned above remain a binding and common feature of our survey. Subjects faced with our request quickly chose what they wanted to represent and only in a few cases was further discussion and clarification necessary. But in those instances some asked if the place needed to be represented as it was in the past, or as it was at the moment of the drawing; others asked if they could represent a place they were attached to, even though that did not coincide with the place of their early childhood. Instructions in these cases were to draw the first place what was significant for the authors of the maps, but sometimes, as we have seen, several of them chose to represent two or more places considered “as important” as their place of origin. But only a few represented places that were completely different from their place of origin, in order to express their dislike for that place.

Whenever it was possible we extended the experiment we had already performed with PhD students, which consisted in downloading the image of the place drawn from *Google Maps* or *Street View*. A comparison between drawings and the “objective” images from the satellite led to further discourses and emotions; sometimes the authors faced with the distortions of their memory expressed surprise.<sup>20</sup> It is also

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<sup>19</sup> Erasures, omissions followed by verbal integrations and the crossing out of pieces of writing frequently testifies this form of self-censorship.

<sup>20</sup> The aim was not provide an exact measure of the precision of the drawing, but to understand with the subjects, where and how his/her lived experiences had led to distortions of the objective representation. While some maps were close to the objective representations, others appeared so fantastic that comparison made no sense. On the other hand, in cases that fell between these two extremes, this analysis has provided interesting results.

important to bear in mind that, as in all kind of texts, empty spaces are as significant as filled spaces, and absences are not always mere *défaillances* of memory.

Beyond these common traits, some contributors have their own peculiar lines of inquiry that will be illustrated in the next paragraph. In my contribution, for example, about 50 students sat the final examination for a socio-semiotic course that consisted, besides the drawing, of an independent dissertation on places of origin, and hence involved students in reflecting generally on such places. In Paola Donatiello's contribution, the twin girls she studied, like all the other subjects in the survey, were tasked with providing a drawing and were interviewed. But unlike in other studies, the survey also involved following an ethnographic method that consisted in going around their town of origin to gather further observations. Nevertheless, these differences do not significantly impinge on the common idea that has inspired this research work. Our focus has always remained the maps and their short commentaries, though not because we wanted to provide an exhaustive interpretation of all the meanings of these verbal-visual texts (this would have required a very long work on each single map and a very detailed interview with the authors). Our aim instead was to show how these verbal-visual texts provide important indications of the way places of origin are perceived nowadays. Problematic issues have also emerged in the course of this survey: for example how do visual and verbal language interconnect in the process of reconstruction of memory? How do emotive, cognitive, perceptual and motor sensory components integrate and interact? What are the specificities of the past when spatialized?

The members of the group have sought to confront and create a dialogue with each other in an attempt to understand how different approaches result in something that is far superior than the sum of each individual essay. Reflections will continue and hopefully lead to more far-reaching results.<sup>21</sup>

## 4 The Meaning of This Study

In conclusion what is the meaning of this research? First of all, this project has aimed at observing the way in which memory is reconstructed and how this reconstruction has been represented. At the end of the analyses two main aspects have emerged: one concerns the *value* that places of origin have for the subjects involved; another is represented by the *cultural instruments* that have been used to express these values. Though it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the two, some subjects have focalized attention mainly on the first aspect, and others on the second.

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<sup>21</sup>A further development of our research will constitute the Bolognese section of the project *Cognition and Performativity*, to be led by Professor Antonino Pennisi (University of Messina). This *Progetto di Ricerca di Interesse Nazionale* (PRIN), funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research, also includes the Universities of Parma, Milan, Rome, Naples, Catania and Palermo.

The last chapter (Pozzato) shows a prevalent focus on the value of places of origin. Here I have tried to detect some *genres of maps*, i.e. some consistent themes inside the collected corpus, and attempted to classify all the drawings and their comments according to these genres. This has not been easy as various criteria were equally possible; for example, formal criteria (type of perspective, graphic choices, modes of enunciation, etc.) or thematic ones (sentimental maps versus cognitive maps, maps that focus on autobiographical events versus maps that provide an illustration of the territory, etc.). I cannot say if the categories I consistently found in this corpus would be equally prevalent in all possible maps of places of origin. From the two hundred maps we collected, the categories which have emerged are: (1) place of origin as *social space* versus place of origin as *individual space* (in literature this is equivalent to the opposition between *epic* and *novel*); (2) *belonging to a single place* of origin versus *belonging to two or more places*. Both of these oppositions have positive and negative associations; in individual space both utopian maps of happy worlds and maps full of negativities, omissions and corrections can be found. Similarly, from the opposite pole, the social one, maps of damaged territories in danger or vice versa improved representations and phenomena of “monumentalization” co-exist. Cases of co-belonging to a multitude of places constitute a specific example and have been treated accordingly. To explain these maps one must shed some doubt on the analytical tools used: faced with a new subjectivity that has no place in a stable existential geography, but only in the process of movement and transformation, what exactly is an *origin*?

Drawing on the words of Lévi Strauss in his work on myths (*si parva licet*), I have attempted to build up “something that resembled an order”. I am aware that by pursuing generalizations, this analysis loses the full intelligibility available from each single case. However, through a comparative method – that is to say through a focus on recurrences – I have aimed at another kind of intelligibility, that is to say the intelligibility of the corpus. Moreover, each statement comes with an example that provides an invitation for readers to themselves observe the verbal-visual texts and decide whether, and to what extent, they agree or disagree with my analysis.

Similarly aimed at investigating how places of origin are connected with value, Giulia Mazzeo’s contribution is the only piece that examines the maps from a psychological point of view courageously conjoining cognitive, environmental and clinical psychology. Mazzeo begins from the assumption that these maps are “maps of self”; the environment represented is the omnipresent background of crucial interpersonal relations, which plays an important role in the construction of a stable and coherent identity. Among the psychological theories used by Mazzeo, the closest to semiotics are the *post-rational* constructivist approach (on this see the work of Vittorio Guidano and Giovanni Liotti) that sees the human mind as a system that constructs meanings. Also, according to Silvan Tomkins, an individual’s memory is made up of a series of narrative scenes. But the Mazzeo’s essay remains distant epistemologically from semiotic-cultural approaches by the fact that psychology primarily tries to understand the causal reasons for these maps: the conflicts, previous experiences, emotive and relational difficulties that *shape* representations. Where all the other contributors adopt a descriptive method that analyzes how visual texts connect to other texts, or more generally to cultural traits, Mazzeo investigates

the personal history of the map maker, and attempts to construct with him/her the meanings for his/her map. This kind of investigation is based on Graphic Projective Tests that allow the author to make hypotheses built on experimental studies. So, for example, an excessively light stroke could be a sign of insecurity, and the way the piece of paper is used could provide clues as to emotive or rational attitudes. However, the results demonstrate that this contribution is far less different from the others than its epistemological differences might suggest. Through a distinctive methodology, Mazzeo provides interpretations of these maps that are comparable with the findings of other scholars in this volume and, at the same, unveil aspects of their analysis that they have not explored, most notably the deep emotional ambivalence that the authors of the drawings often show towards their place of origin.

Also, the articles by Margherita Murgiano and Giulia Nardelli mainly focus on the value attached to places of origins. These studies deal with two different, and yet, related aspects of our corpus that concerns the role of perception and corporeality. Murgiano has studied the maps drawn by deaf subjects and the way these have been commented by their authors through the language of signs; she shows that the whole body of the signer becomes a vehicle of significations producing effects of both objectification and subjectification of the narration. For example, by using the strategy of the *Role-Shift*, the author of the map moves from a detached modality to a re-enactment of his/her agency. This case demonstrates what we have described above, i.e. the inextricable link between subjectivity and culture: indeed, sign language involves the body, but it is also strictly codified. Notwithstanding the very specific case of deaf people, it has many general features. Sign language necessarily sets up a spatial scene, but as in every kind of language, perceptual and motor experiences are an influence, and actually provided an inspiration for the maps we have gathered. Giulia Nardelli has focused attention precisely on this aspect of our corpus and has analyzed those maps in which actions performed in close connection with space have influenced the representation; for example, from her analysis it emerges that a subject who loves biking has organised his representation around a cycle-track, or that another who was at the time learning to drive saw her town as a succession of 'stop' signs.

The chapters by Enzo D'Armenio, Emanuele Frixia and Federico Montanari have focused on the underlying cultural models utilised in the map representations. D'Armenio shows the influence of some technologies and media: the image montage in some drawings may simulate the image montage seen in a photographic album, or the way the title of a drawing might imitate that of a television series, and how zoom effects recall cinematographic techniques. What emerges in this chapter is that the imaginary of the subjects involved (in particular those of the last generation) is strongly influenced by their exposure to contemporary media, so much so that when they visually express their memories, they make a sort of *bricolage* of media genres. Similarly, Montanari's essay shows how contemporary geo-position techniques have also influenced our way of traversing space and the very idea of space. The representation of one's place of origin seems in some cases to be indebted to these new models, prefiguring a deep transformation in the very perception of space that the author defines with the expression of "geo-locative turn". The models compared by Emanuele Frixia are cartographical. Frixia considers some basic modalities of representing a map from periods that range from early history to the contem-



porary present. According to his analysis, almost all these modalities have been utilized in our corpus of drawings. Common sense has it that a geographical map is a precise document that is useful for “navigation” in space. However, Frixia argues that our maps can be connected with Edward Soja’s idea of “thirdspace” (*trialectics of spatiality*). That is to say, the maps analyzed create mental, physical and social models and hence the representation of space is always and, at one and the same time, real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical.

So far, the aforementioned contributors have interpreted an extended corpus, and so can be said to have carried out a *macro*-survey. The last two contributors that I will now discuss concentrate on a limited number of maps and, for this reason, can be seen as examples of a *micro*-survey. This kind of analysis has no general aim, but rather provides a close reading of a limited number of cases. For this reason it can be seen as complementing the disadvantages of a macro survey that, by focusing on a general framework, necessarily loses the enormous potentiality of a detailed analysis. Alessandra Bonazzi’s essay focuses on a single map that exemplifies well the geographical nature of the act of remembering since the place anchors and activates memory. The map in question is of Terténia, a village in Sardinia and it is simultaneously a classical map (there are roads, nodes and districts in the sense of the categories theorized by the urban planner Kevin Lynch), but also an *a posteriori* description of a childhood experience strictly connected with those practices, elements and imaginary constructions that have populated a remote past (i.e. games, secret places, rails to jump over). Focusing on a particular map has allowed the author to provide an in-depth analysis that brings to light both the complexity of this representation and its poetical potential.

Lastly, the case study of Paola Donatiello also provides a micro survey that concentrates on the maps drawn by two twins. The “real” place, as it is photographed by Google Maps, is compared with the drawings in order to highlight similarities and differences. Despite the fact that the two twins have always lived together, the way they value their place of origin, their choice of relevant elements, and more generally the way they have organized their maps are very different and show how these representations are highly subjective constructions even when they concentrate on the same place, from a similar cultural and existential point of view. Indeed, this is the crucial point of all our work: the most intimate and individualistic needs of the subject – including embodied relations and subjective experiences – co-exist with collective, social and cultural needs. The cases presented by Mazzeo are once again significant in this respect, because the problems concerning the construction of the self are connected and intertwined with the specific historical conditions in which this corpus has been produced, one that is characterized by a high degree of geographical mobility, media influence, and the employment of new digital and satellite technologies. As Annie Ernaux has noted (2008) in the conclusion of her autobiography (paradoxically written in the third person), what is crucial for her – and for all the authors of the maps in our corpus – is the narration of “what has made her unique; that is to say neither social events (such as social position or profession), nor intimate ones (thoughts, aspirations or her desire to write), but the combination of the two that is unique in all individuals”.

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**Part I**  
**Maps, Place of Origin, Identity:**  
**Underlying Cultural Models**

# Intermedial Editing in the Representations of Places of Origin

Enzo D'Armenio

**Abstract** Among the maps of places of origin considered in this study, more than fifty contain elements of montage, i.e. drawings in which heterogeneous entities are juxtaposed, producing a semantic gap. In the majority of such drawings, the authors went beyond the mere juxtaposition of different elements to realize more radical editing operations, adapting creatively to the representation of one's place of origin composition techniques borrowed from popular genres and media. Some drawings, for instance, include the reproduction of a series of photographs; others imitate graphic visualization techniques (e.g. zooming) or comics; others include a legend, i.e. a list of symbols with an explanation of their meanings. The techniques used in these maps, this chapter suggests, can be considered examples of intermedial editing. The chapter's aim is to analyze these drawings focusing on the montage and imitation techniques used by their authors. The first part of the chapter investigates these compositional processes from a theoretical point of view, combining a semiotic perspective with insights from other disciplines. In particular, the reflections on the aesthetic aspects of montage (paragraph 2) are connected to enunciation theory (paragraph 3). By integrating the concepts of montage, practice of the enunciation (*praxis énonciative*) and *bricolage*, it will be possible to consider these drawings under a common descriptive frame (paragraph 4). The second part of this chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the maps, which will be ordered according to the level of complexity of their montage procedures (paragraph 5): starting from degree zero – which corresponds to an atypical use of the elements of the map – we shall then focus on the use of color and text, and finally concentrate primarily on those cases that present the imitation of different media devices, genres and visualization techniques.

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## 1 Introduction

The chapter analyzes a specific sub-corpus of drawings, which feature montage elements and produce effects of semantic gap.<sup>1</sup> Attention will be devoted primarily to those representations that contain an imitation of different genres, devices and techniques of media representation. For this reason, the analysis will focus on visual texts – although oral enunciations will be considered when it will be necessary to clarify the statute of the elements represented.<sup>2</sup>

Three issues concerning visual enunciation should be highlighted, as they provide the starting point for the development of our analysis. First of all, in order to understand the cases of editing, it is important to emphasize the low degree of conventionality of visual language as compared to verbal language.<sup>3</sup> Visual language is less regulated by grammar than verbal language; as a result, when asked to draw their place of origin the interviewees have generally looked for models that could compensate for this lack of structure. Secondly, visual language has been chosen deliberately by the authors of the study, in order to avoid the *clichés* of the verbal one. Thirdly, in order to limit the potentially infinite possibilities provided by graphic language, imitation has been directly encouraged by asking subjects to draw “a sort of map”.

Starting from these assumptions, the study investigates the process of enunciation that the interviewed subjects have realized starting from the semantic virtualities of their culture: it is in fact possible to describe the group of drawings considered here as peculiar visual texts, as they represent places that are very personal, but do so in a way that juxtaposes heterogeneous elements and imitates media narrations present in today's culture. This process will be analyzed using the concept of *enunciation* introduced by Émile Benveniste in the linguistic field. Extended by contemporary semiotics to all type of textual productions, the theory of enunciation deals with the structures and the processes of mediation that regulate the passage from the impersonal cultural system to subjective realizations.

In order to place all the cases selected here under a common descriptive framework, we shall first refer to the theories that have studied the acts of “putting together”, i.e. the montage method devised by Sergei Eisenstein (1937) and the logic of *bricolage* developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962). A brief summary of

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<sup>1</sup>With the term *isotopy* semiotics indicates the recurrence of semantic marks that gives coherence of a text. Therefore, it is possible to indicate the processes of semantic gap, often described as rhetorical mechanisms (Group μ 1992), using the notion of *allotopy*.

<sup>2</sup>For an explanation of the criteria adopted in collecting the drawings for this study, see chapter “Introduction”, to this volume, in particular paragraph 2. All the contributors to this volume have worked on the same corpus of drawings, from which a specific group has been selected in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup>The nature of the iconic sign has been the object of a very heated debate, centered on the degree of similarity or conventionality of visual signs with respect to the objects they represent. See Eco (1997), Polidoro (2015), Nardelli (infra).

their common elements and, above all, of their differences, will also serve to characterize our corpus, and identify our criteria of analysis. After having placed our corpus under a clear methodological framework, we shall analyze it employing the tools of generative visual semiotic (Greimas 1984; Floch 1986; Dondero 2011).

## 2 Montage

Yuri Lotman (Lotman et al. 1973) has identified montage as one of the main art techniques which have characterized the twentieth century. Before becoming one of the key techniques of cinema, montage had already been used in avant-garde art movements and in theater. Several techniques that we found in our corpus are similar to those described by Lotman: for example, cubism was characterized by a critical juxtaposition of different points of view and materials, as *collage* and *assemblage*.

A similar position informs the theoretical contribution of Sergei Eisenstein, who has studied montage as a general composition principle.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars have explored these issues: as noted by Lotman, montage is a concept that has permeated not only Twentieth Century's art, but also the critical reflection on art. However, Eisenstein has explored the possibilities of montage in a systematic way: his ideas allow us to compare the procedures he describes with the ones adopted in our corpus. It is possible to describe the idea of montage developed by Eisenstein as a method of enunciation aimed at the production of effective works of art. Through the synthesis of heterogeneous materials, montage seeks to realize a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, thanks to the way in which it models the interpreter's activity. It is well known that the Soviet film director has used montage in his cinematic works, but in his most important theoretical works he described montage as a procedure that involves all forms of art. *Towards a Theory of Montage* (1937) includes references and analyses that range from literature – in particular Puškin and Mallarmé – to the architecture of the Parthenon and to Stanivslavskij's theater. In all the cases he considers, Eisenstein identifies the same compositional structures, which he relates to the reactions of the spectators. In short, what Eisenstein proposes is an aesthetic theory constructed on the basis of a formalist approach.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>A reinterpretation of Eisenstein's theoretical work is today at the center of an important aesthetic movement which looks beyond cinema to focus on the issue of media archive and, more generally, on visual experience. On this topic, see Aumont (2005), Bordwell (1993), Montani (1999, 2010), Somaini (2011).

<sup>5</sup>In *Nonindifferent nature* (1964) Eisenstein broadens the scope of his reflections. Here he describes montage as an effective process because it works in accordance not only with the syntax of human thought – in particular with the “internal dialogue” theorized by Eisenstein's friend Lev Vygotskij in *Thought and Language* (1934) – but also with the laws of nature. Eisenstein postulates a structural similarity between works of art and organic phenomena. The effectiveness of the montage processes could therefore be justified by its connection with the biological features common to all living beings.

With regard to cinema, Eisenstein takes into account the different level of complexity of montage operations, ordering them from the simplest to the most complex. In doing so, he often takes examples from other forms of art. The first stage of montage occurs in a single shot. “Eisenstein proposes the example of the drawing of a barricade, in which the individual details are assembled in order to convey, when considered together, the idea of struggle” (Casetti 1985, p. XIX, my translation). The next level consists of the sequence of more than one shot. According to Eisenstein, this level can be found in several literary works, but can also be illustrated with an example of analytical montage: “if we align, joining them together, hooves pounding on the ground, the head of a running horse and the back of a fleeing horse, we will obtain in its exactness and significance the image of a gallop” (*Ibidem*). This level is followed by audiovisual montage, of which Eisenstein describes in particular the operations of polyphony and counterpoint. The final level consists of color, which provides the images with visual rhythm by creating contrasts and harmonies.

In the drawings of our sub-corpus, several techniques described by Eisenstein can be found, as well as the same principle of conflict and gaps recurring at all levels of the composition. Eisenstein’s method of organizing the analysis according to the increasing complexity of montage techniques appears particularly interesting in the light of the reflections of philosopher Pietro Montani – one of the most original critics of Eisenstein’s works – who has theorized a further typology of montage, one that juxtaposes different media dimensions. Montani highlights the importance of the connection between the iconic density of the images and their discursive ability, emphasizing a peculiar characteristic of montage, i.e. the ability to “to activate the same process of deconstruction and reconstruction at different expressive levels, from color to movement, from space to music”, and to extend it to “the technical formats of the image (for example the digital or analogical) and the relationship between different media (for example cinema, television or computer graphic)” (Montani 2014, p. 15, my translation). This chapter focuses precisely on this last type of intermedial montage, which appears frequently in our sub-corpus: a process of enunciation that simulates medium-supports (such as photography), visual techniques (zoom procedures) and genres (comics). In line with Eisenstein’s hypothesis, the procedures that make a work of art effective are precisely the expressive gaps that characterize all forms of montage, including the intermedial one: “An explicit playing with different media forms, whose opacity is intended to stimulate in the spectator a reflection on the irreducible alterity of what is represented, on its *being different*” (Montani 2010, p. 13, my translation).

### 3 Between Imagination and Enunciation

Despite the similarities mentioned above, the compositional procedures described by Eisenstein and those found in our sub-corpus differ in their respective aims. In fact, the Soviet filmmaker’s hypotheses are useful to see how the logic of montage

in our drawings differs from the artistic objectives which interested him. Some general considerations apply to both cases. Eisenstein writes that montage is effective because its techniques appeal to the spectators' imagination. In particular, their effectiveness is due to the "ability to bring together *two separate phenomena* into a *generalized image*" (Eisenstein 1937, p. 119; eng. trans.). The ability to connect fragments of a representation into a thematic generalization is crucial here because "this is not only the primary phenomenon of cinematic technique; it's above all a primary phenomenon of the human mind's capacity to create images" (*Ibidem*). In other words, Eisenstein proposes a method of artistic composition based on a specific aesthetic theory of reception. According to him, a work of art is effective only if it contributes to create a sort of *Model Reader* who is critically engaged.<sup>6</sup> Borrowing from Eco's well-known theory of semiotic literature (1979), what should be constructed is a text that works like a lazy machine: with its blank spaces, incomplete views or even gaps, it forces the interpreter to complete the work through inferences. In a similar way, according to Eisenstein, it is possible to insert in the text "bias-inducing schematizations" (Somaini 2011) that the spectators will absorb during the interpretative process. The consequence of this active contribution on the part of the reader should heighten the ability of the work to transmit its values. In this respect, Pietro Montani (2010) has adopted an aesthetic viewpoint compatible with Eco's semiotics, tracing an interesting parallel between intermedial montage and imagination. If montage is a technique, Montani argues that "imagination itself has some technical quality", because it is not only a subjective faculty "but one that also derives from a number of artificial practices" (Montani 2010, p. XV, my translation). "Imagination of course is a faculty of the subject, but only because it is at the same time also a subjectifying tool, a receptive and productive practice that reveals the historical subject's dependence on the images to which he has already and constantly been exposed" (*Ibidem*). Following Montani, it can be said that imagination works by mediating between already realized semiotic productions – which he indicates as the media archive – and any new productive or interpretative operation. According to Montani "like language, imagination is based on pre-existing images" (*Ivi*, p. XVI, my translation). In our opinion, the idea of the media archive described by Montani shares significant features with the concept of Encyclopedia as elaborated by Umberto Eco (1984), i.e. a vast but not infinite repertoire of semiotic knowledge situated in a certain historical period (Violi 1997). Considered from this viewpoint, the Encyclopedia plays the important role of regulating new interpretations and semiotic productions – a function similar to the one that the archive has in the processes of imagination. Although the intermedial techniques mentioned by Montani construct very sharp semiotic gaps, these can easily be solved by the spectators, because their interpretative and imaginative activity is regulated by the encyclopedic knowledge in which they are immersed. It is

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<sup>6</sup>We are referring to the well known distinction between Model Reader and Model Author proposed by Umberto Eco in *Lector in fabula* (1979). These two concepts do not indicate empirical readers and authors, rather textual strategies that emerge from the work and that text itself contributes to construct.



precisely this imaginative and interpretative relationship that makes works of art effective. The fundamental difference between Eco's and Montani's concepts lies in the nature of the expression, as the former limited his analysis to literary texts, while the latter focused mainly on images. It seems therefore that a theory of imagination like the one we have just mentioned shows many points of convergence with a theory of semiotic enunciation: as imagination always depends on the works that belong to the media archive, so enunciation functions by summoning in a creative way the virtual possibilities of the Encyclopedia. Adopting a semiotic perspective, our analysis will consist in proceeding from the visual utterances making up our sub-corpus to the fragments of the Encyclopedia which they have elicited: from the *intentio operis* we shall move to the *intentio auctoris* (Eco 1990), examining the determining influence of media models.

The theory of enunciation elaborated by Émile Benveniste (1966–1974) will provide a consistent theoretical background to investigate our cases. According to Benveniste, enunciation is the act which the speaker performs each time he appropriates the system of language. Through an act of speech, the speaker produces a discourse, of which at the same time he represents the subject. Thanks to this concept, it is possible to study the structures and the processes of mediation that regulate the passage from the impersonal linguistic system to subjective realizations.<sup>7</sup> Algirdas Julien Greimas (Greimas and Courtés 1979) has adopted Benveniste's theory, adapting it to non-verbal production. The enunciation becomes then a process of *convocation* which, starting from the totality of semantic virtualities, selects and modulates a portion of them to realize an enunciated text. Contemporary semiotics (Fontanille 2000) has extended this theory first to non-verbal language, and then to all cultural productions. Enunciation thus describes the mediations that occur between the cultural archive (encyclopedic system) and the instance of actual utterance (discursive process). The notion of the *practice of the enunciation* (*praxis énonciative*) has led to further clarifications. As has been noted by Gianfranco Marrone, concentrating on the *praxis* means attributing less importance to the language system, in order to “study the way in which topoi, stereotypes, discursive genres and ways of saying that are constituted in semiotic *use* (in a hjelmslevian sense) reverberate as *primitives* in the virtual system of language” (Marrone 2003, p. 11). It is no longer a question of insisting on the subjectivity that emerges from the language system, but rather on the “collective instance that lies behind, or inside, each enunciator: the I who speaks is me only in relation to the socio-cultural instance that passes and speaks through me” (*Ibidem*). It is therefore possible to describe the subjectivities of the people interviewed starting from the way in which genres and topoi have “spoken through them”.

Before starting our analysis, it is also important to define more precisely the discursive utterances that make up our corpus. If montage consists of a type of enun-

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<sup>7</sup>In order to study these structures of mediation, Benveniste has identified a formal apparatus of enunciation, comprising of those elements of language that acquire meaning only with reference to the actual situation of enunciation, e.g. personal pronouns (I, you, he), temporal and place deictics, verb tenses.

ciation that functions by putting together different fragments, it is important to note a fundamental difference between Eisenstein's logic and the one that emerges from our drawings. According to the Soviet filmmaker, the composition principle of montage consists of three main moments: firstly, a general theme is deconstructed in the diagram of its constitutive parts, whose relationships and dynamics are highlighted. Secondly, these parts are rearranged in such a way that the spectator – third moment – can synthesize a general thematic *image* on the basis of the selected representations and their order. The notion of thematic *image* should not be understood in its common meaning: Eisenstein refers to a specific connotation of the concept of *image*, which is not directly connected to the elements of the composition. Strictly speaking, the image is absent from the work of art because it should arise in the mind of the spectator through a thematic generalization of the figures which are represented: "A truly realistic work of art (...) must contain as an indissoluble whole *both* the representation of a phenomenon *and* its image; by 'image' is meant a generalized statement about the essence of the particular phenomenon" (Eisenstein 1937, p. 4; eng. trans.). Francesco Casetti (1985) has noted that Eisenstein's systemic and formal approach is consistent with some aspects of Ferdinand De Saussure's idea of structure. It is not difficult to see how representations and thematic images are conceptually close to the *figures* and *themes* of Greimas' semiotics (Greimas and Courtés 1979; Greimas 1984): while figures can be found in a text, themes are disseminated in semantic recurrences and need to be analyzed through a process of abstraction.

In the procedures elaborated by Eisenstein the starting point was represented by a general theme that was later deconstructed into its constitutive parts, in order to produce a representation capable of evoking an effective thematic image. In the following passages, we will try to show how an opposite mechanism regulates the compositional process of the interviewed subjects. For them, the starting point to represent their places of origin is not a single phenomenon, but a dense combination of spaces and lived events. Moreover, in our cases the matter was not to deconstruct phenomena into their components – as these were already in their own way plural entities – but to synthesize them in a single representation characterized by unity. While Eisenstein's montage requires a strong subject of the enunciation, one that can assemble all the heterogeneous elements into an effective work of art, in our drawings the opposite takes place: the subjects interviewed, in the process of representing a personal place, were influenced by effective works of art that circulate in today's culture. For this reason, this chapter suggests that it is not important to analyze the effectiveness of the drawings or try to describe the *Model Reader* they contribute to construct. What is significant is instead to attempt to re-trace their *Model Author* (Eco 1979), i.e. the weak and modular subjectivity which emerges from the representation of places of origin.

## 4 *Bricolage*

In order to bridge the gap between the logic of montage as described by Eisenstein, and the logic of montage in our sub-corpus, we will resort to a classical anthropological concept: the procedures of *bricolage* theorized by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962). The formal logic of montage as described by Eisenstein is in fact based on opposite assumptions from those underlying the concrete logic of the *bricolage*. Lévi-Strauss describes the *bricoleur* and his aims as follows: “[he] does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project”, because “the rules of his game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’” (Lévi-Strauss 1962, p. 17; eng. trans.). It is well known that Lévi-Strauss defines the *bricoleur* in opposition to the *engineer*: while the latter has a tool for each single purpose, the former has a limited set of tools that he uses for various occasions. Thanks to Lévi-Strauss’s explanations concerning the operative work of the *bricoleur*, it is possible to describe the dynamics of the enunciation in our sub-corpus, and distinguish it from the montage. First of all, Lévi-Strauss focuses on the way in which the *bricoleur* chooses compositional solutions. “He has to turn back to an already existent set of given tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it” (*Ivi*, p. 18). The same problem-solving process was likely triggered in the subjects interviewed by the request to represent one’s place of origin. They have also began from the models available “at hand” in their Encyclopedia, choosing and adapting those that they thought better suited for their purposes, while also engaging in a “sort of dialogue” with these models during the enunciation process.<sup>8</sup> The imaginative feature that prepares the linguistic realization clearly emerges in this first stage, so much so that Lévi-Strauss insists on the fact that a typical characteristic of signs is to be half-way between “images and concepts” (*Ibidem*). Although it consists in the selection of pre-constituted models, the *bricolage* is not predominantly an impersonal process. Lévi-Strauss clearly stresses this point: “Further, the ‘bricoleur’ also, and indeed principally, derives his poetry from the fact that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution” (*Ivi*, p. 21). In describing the process of appropriation of the *bricoleur*, Lévi-Strauss provides reflections that are particularly helpful for our corpus:

he ‘speaks’ not only *with* things, as we have already seen, but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The ‘bricoleur’ may not ever complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it. (*Ibidem*)

Starting from this comparison, we can try to consider our sub-corpus and its forms of enunciation under a single explicative framework. Our corpus is composed by a series of visual texts realized through montage procedures, but whose logic is that

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<sup>8</sup> Lévi-Strauss’s work contains no reference to the theory of enunciation. However, *Bricolage* as enunciation has been theorized by the French semiotician Jean-Marie Floch (1985, 1995).

of *bricolage*: in order to graphically represents a single place on a spatio-temporal level – a place that is filled with lived and affective experiences – the subjects have chosen a series of “ready at hand” media models. However, they have not simply re-presented them: they have engaged in a creative dialogue with such models, through a synthesis of stereotypical elements derived from culture and the work of a personal enunciation.

## 5 Corpus

Borrowing Eisenstein’s idea, the chapter analyzes the sub-corpus according to the level of complexity of montage operations, proceeding from the simplest cases to those that provide an increasingly elaborate mixture of representational techniques. The most extensive part of our analysis will be dedicated to cases of intermedial montage.<sup>9</sup> As far as the idea of *genre* is concerned, we will see how this notion – that here has been used to define the general lines of our discourse – needs to be re-defined on more formal bases.

### 5.1 *The Landscape, the Postcard, the Bird’s-Eye View*

We will start with those cases that show a single image which is reproduced following the graphic models of the painting, the landscape and the postcard. To speak about montage in these cases is not entirely appropriate, as these cases consist of simple imitations of specific cultural models, and can thus be considered as a sort of degree zero from which montage techniques begin to emerge.

Figure 1 uses stereotypes typical of picture postcards and, more generally, of landscape images: it does not include any elements that suggest subjective features. While the landscape model allows the variation of the point of view, here there is no sign of a personalization by the subject of the enunciation – with the sole exception of the use of color.

In Figs. 2 and 3, the point of view becomes more peculiar and seems to imitate video or photographic shots taken using a helicopter. A peculiar *distal adjustment* (Dondero and Fontanille 2012) is realized between the object represented and the point of view, thanks to which the widening of the view does not result impersonal

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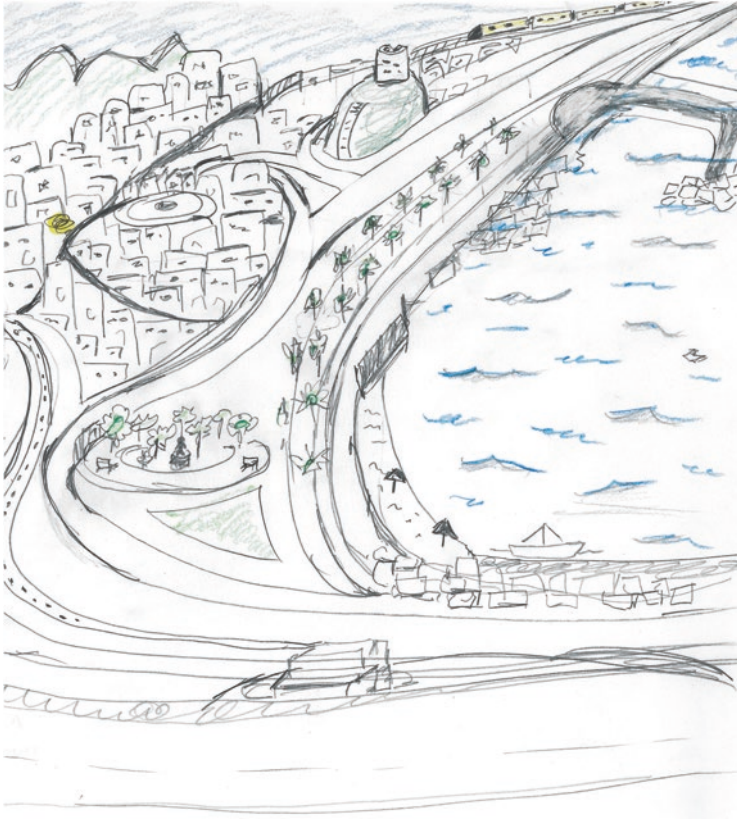
<sup>9</sup>Bolter and Grusin (2000) have elaborated the concept of *remediation* to indicate three media tendencies: the presence of one medium inside a representation realized by another medium; the competition between old and new media; the cases of media simulation. In our opinion the weakness of this classification lies in the fact that one single concept refers to three very different phenomena. For a critique of the concept of new and old media, see Natale (2016). On this subject see also Eugeni (2015).



**Fig. 1** An example of landscape

as in the map model.<sup>10</sup> In addition, two elements can be found here that will acquire an important role in the following typologies of maps. In its original colored version, Fig. 2 shows two buildings whose yellow color signals their particular importance for the author. These two elements, located in the upper left part and in the group of houses at the center, are salient with respect to the rest of the composition, which is depicted in black and white. The use of an arrow draws further attention to one of these elements, located in the upper left part. A similar pattern characterizes the drawing in Fig. 3, in which color is used to give salience to the trees, cars and buildings. Here the names of two streets and of the mountains that appear in the distance surround the school. In the center and on the left, two anthropomorphic figures emerge from behind a building. This brief description indicates the presence

<sup>10</sup>According to geographical classifications there are two kinds of maps: those that adopt a hodological point of view, and those that adopt a chorographic one. While the former represent a place according to the point of view of a subject and in relation to his experience, the latter represent a geographical area more impersonally, adopting a point of view from above (see Bonazzi and Frixia in this book). Despite this technical classification, the majority of the subjects interviewed has identified the idea of “map” with the impersonal and chorographic representation. It is significant that several of them, after drawing a hodological map, have found it necessary to point out that their intention was not to draw a geographical map. The choice not to draw an impersonal map can be interpreted as a decision on the part of the subject of the enunciation to distance himself from a model perceived as predominant.



**Fig. 2** An example of bird's-eye view

of a considerable number of montage elements: the view from above – that evokes the point of view of a helicopter shot – is combined with a peculiar use of color, non-figurative graphic elements and a stylized representation of human beings. From an impersonal and quantitative model like the one of the map – which in its most rigorous form only requires the inclusion of toponyms, architectonic elements and the road network – we are moving towards an enunciatonal personalization that re-configures space around lived experiences.

## 5.2 *Figurative Logic and Verbal Language*

The next level in our sub-corpus introduces montage techniques: the use of graphic materials in these discursive utterances becomes more complex and personal.

Figure 4 shows a configuration that in semiotics is called *semi-symbolic*: this configuration is realized when one or more categorial oppositions of the plane of

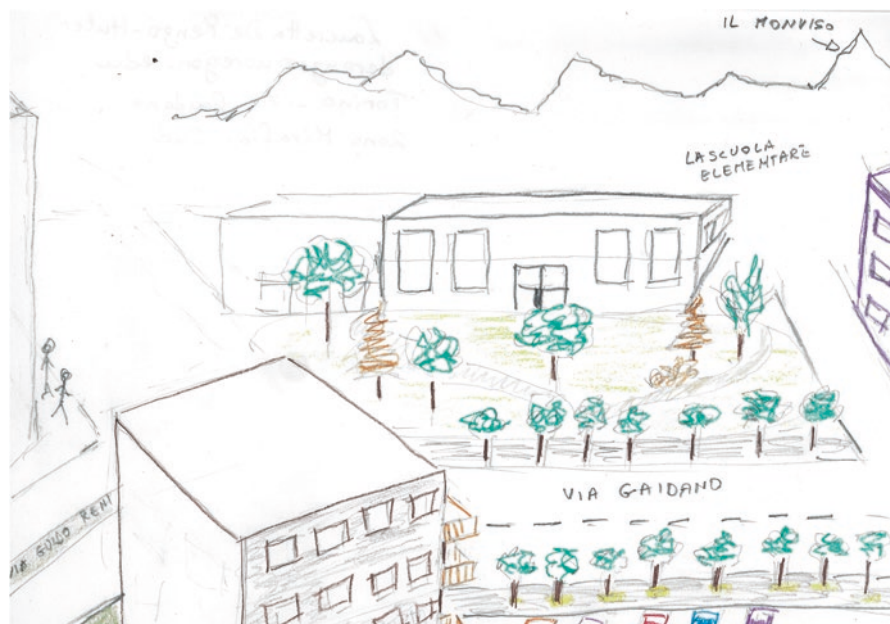


Fig. 3 An example of bird's-eye view



Fig. 4 An example of semi-symbolism

expression are related to one or more oppositions of the plane of the content. In this drawing the spatial organization and the use of color clearly indicate two different conceptual developments. On the left there are the colored symbols of two cities – Maniago and Pinsk – connected by footsteps forming a path. These emblems are projected from the geographical silhouette of the regions that contain them, through the simulation of a sort of zoom vision. In the section on the right, on the contrary, the elements are represented in black and white and indicate some objects that presumably symbolize practical activities, rather than spatial localizations: a computer, a pencil next to a piece of paper on which some geometrical figures are drawn, and pliers next to a book of stamps. The semi-symbolism is evident: the left section of the drawing – the colored one – indicates the part of the content referring to the geographical localization of the author, while the black and white one on the right represents his activities at that time. In this way a case of *figurative thought* (Bertrand 2000) is realized: the drawing illustrates paths of sense without using verbal language and manages to separate two semantic fields using visual tools. Furthermore, the pairing of these elements does not follow a narrative sequence (*pictogram*), consisting instead of a conciliatory montage between heterogeneous elements, which follows a mythical sequence (*mythogram*) (see Pozzato, *infra*).

A similar case is represented by Fig. 5. Here the montage organizes the figures around a central core from which various vectors branch off. These are connected to different work and free time activities, each of which is summarized by a metonymy-

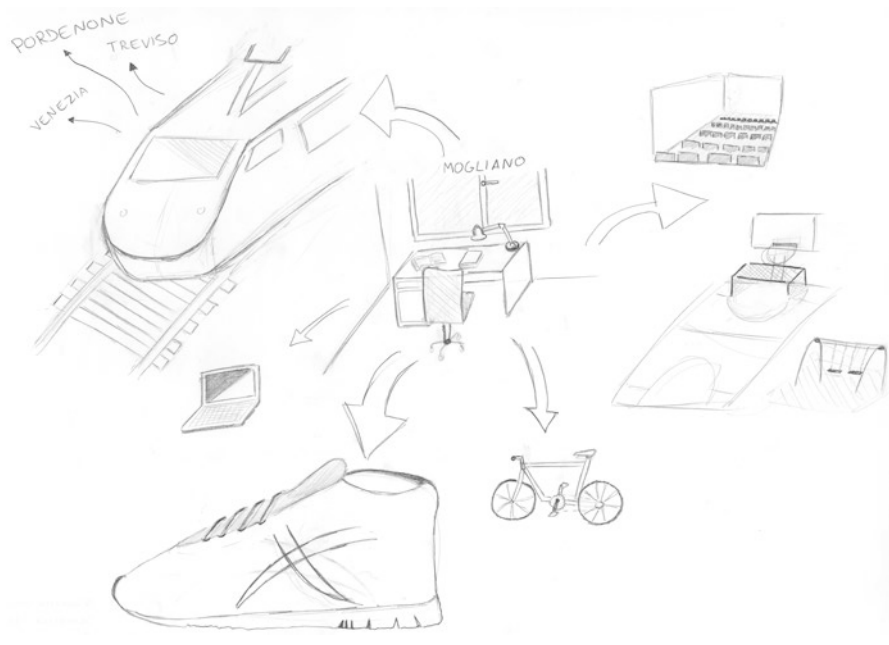
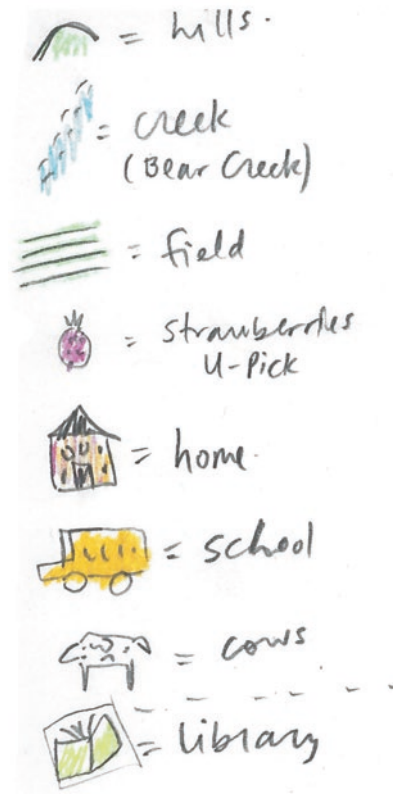


Fig. 5 An example of figurative thinking



**Fig. 6** An example of a list of symbols with explanations



cal image. As far as free time is concerned, we have a professional bicycle, a tennis shoe, the interior of a cinema, a football pitch and a swing. Work-related activities are symbolized by a desk and a computer. A further group of arrows starts from the train represented in the upper left part, at whose extremities we can see the toponyms of three cities.

This image belongs to another typology which recurs frequently in our corpus, and which could be identified as a *visual list*. This representation also provides the first example of contamination between verbal and graphic language. The contamination is present across the corpus, but its use is so flexible that it is difficult to identify a univocal application.

In order to show places of interest and give them personal meaning, several representations have put together visual elements and verbal language using the format of the legend, i.e. a list of conventional signs accompanied by their explanation. Some drawings focus on figurative elements that are recognizable and somehow connected to conventions of cartographical representation (Figs. 6 and 7).

The detail of the drawing in Fig. 6, for instance, shows the symbols of mountains, rivers and buildings, typical of a geographical map. The representation, however, also includes personal elements such as “home” and “cow”, as if the subject wanted to avoid any distinction between his place of origin and other elements. In

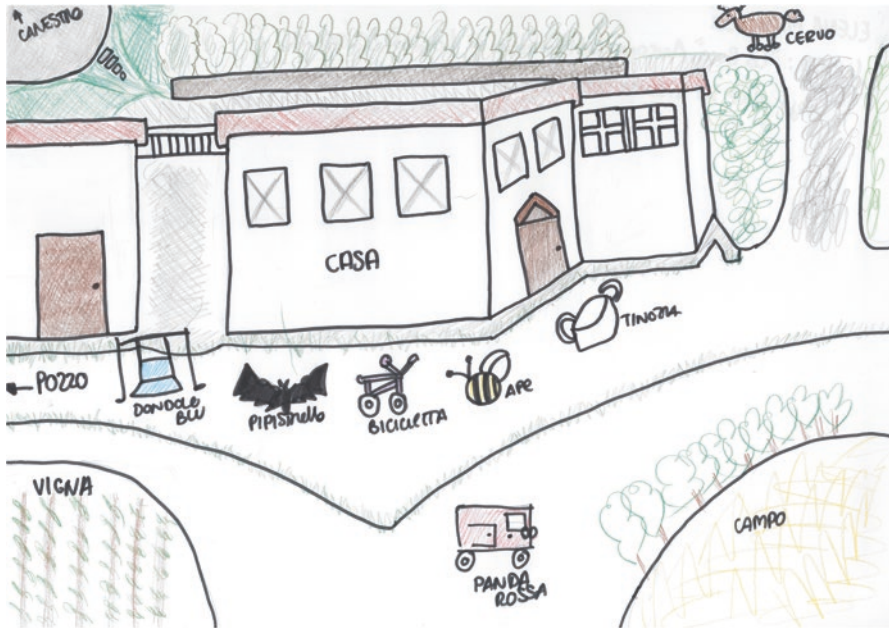


Fig. 7 An example of a list of symbols with explanations

our opinion, this peculiar way of representing the place of origin – without distinguishing it from any other space – is a choice of enunciation that is worth noting. In Fig. 7, on the contrary, the author chooses some representative elements devoid of topographical contextualization, probably singling out those that made his childhood a special period. Using a strategy of elective montage, this image follows both a *pictogrammatic* logic, provided by the spatio-temporal unity of the scene, and a *mythogrammatic* one, because it orders the elements according to an abstract criterion, without connecting them with an action.

### 5.3 Color and Emotions

Among those montage components that, according to Eisenstein, regulate the rhythm of a representation, color plays a crucial role. This element determines the intensity of the composition, so much so that the Soviet film-maker states that “within the pictorial image, color stands in roughly the same relationship to the graphic outline as does music to the pictorial image as a whole” (Eisenstein 1937, p. 261; eng. trans.). Two drawings in particular seem to provide a confirmation of this parallelism.

As Maria Pia Pozzato has remarked in her chapter “[Genres of Maps of Places of Origin: A Semiotic Survey](#)”, in this volume, the drawing in Fig. 8 represents well an idea of the place of origin as a cheerful place (see Pozzato’s essay). What is interesting to note here is the distribution of color in the representation. First of all, what



**Fig. 8** An example of emotional use of the color

transpires is that, more than a place of origin, this drawing is clearly trying to represent a community of origin. Several elements contribute to this kind of configuration, above all the intention to reproduce actions in progress: the musical notes that come out of the church, the children that play in the square, the bus passing through the main street. These ongoing processes make it possible to divide the drawing into two main sections: in the lower part the author has represented himself and some of his family members in a static position, presenting them as the heroes of his story. In the rest of the composition, the place of origin is filled with the people that have played a role during his childhood, represented as performing some kind of action.

In the light of the indications provided during the interview by the map's author, there is also another area worth focusing on. This is located in the upper left section, and is the only colored area, right next to the sun (Fig. 9). The author has explained to us that while the rest of the drawing represents *Piane d'Archi* (a village in the province of Chieti), the colored part is not directly connected with the other elements, because it shows another village several kilometers away, where his maternal grandparents lived: they both feature as small figures in the area selected. The circumscribed area where the color has been used thus indicates an ellipsis, which serves to keep together elements that share the same affective meaning but do not belong to the same space. In other words, color both highlights the affective value of the elements represented, and works as a functional indicator of the spatial ellipsis.

The case in Fig. 10 emphasizes even more this affective concentration, because color does not cover a whole area, but a single and very small element.



**Fig. 9** Detail of the coloured area



**Fig. 10** An example of the use of color to indicate concentration of emotion in an area

The place represented is Las Torres de Cotillas in the South of Spain. The first impression of this drawing is of a closed and private space; while approaching this representation, the first detail one notices is the gate that obstructs the view inside the courtyard. It is possible, nevertheless, to glimpse some elements that are beyond it. Immediately on the right there are two dogs that seem to move towards the spectator's gaze and – presumably – towards somebody who is approaching the gate. On the far right, there is a swing and a dog kennel. In the background, thick vegetation heightens the impression of closeness and privacy in the drawing.

This brief description leaves little doubt that the drawing represents someone that is going back home. However, what interests us is another detail: at the center of the drawing, slightly on the right, it is possible to see the only colored element, i.e. a green car parked at the end of the drive, positioned towards the person that is presumably about to enter the gate. The author of the drawing has explained to us that the figure represents a broken car on which he and his sister used to play, an information that helps us understand the use of color: in the drawing, from a functional object the car becomes an affective one. However, the use of color is not just related to a ludic dimension: the author has added that the car had belonged to his mother, who had died of illness the previous year. Starting from this colored elements, it is thus possible to see that the whole drawing is characterized by the tension between two forces: the centrifugal force of the elements facing the figure who is going back home, and the centripetal force represented by the movement of returning home. This tension is condensed in the central part of the drawing, where the green car is placed: this position and the use of color qualify this element as the spatial, ludic and affective center of the whole composition.

#### **5.4 *Photography: Material Medium-Supports, Devices, Formal Medium-Supports***

Figures 11 and 12 provide us with two cases of media simulation. Besides confirming what has been said above about strategies of *bricolage*, these cases also provide elements for a reflection about the notion of *genre*. This concept has been at the center of the critical debate for a long time, starting from works such as Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic* – although it is in literary studies that this idea has been most extensively studied.<sup>11</sup> In our analysis, on the contrary, we are not dealing with an imitation or adaptation of literary genres, but rather with a series of graphic representations that simulate other media genres, devices and languages. The following two cases are particularly interesting in this respect.

The drawing of Jesolo in Fig. 11 seems to simulate a series of photographic images, particularly as far as their medium-support, the chosen framing and the

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<sup>11</sup> On the problems connected with the notion of *genre*, with particular reference to literature, see Schaeffer (1989) and Rastier (2001). With regard to the cinematographic genre, see Altman (1999).

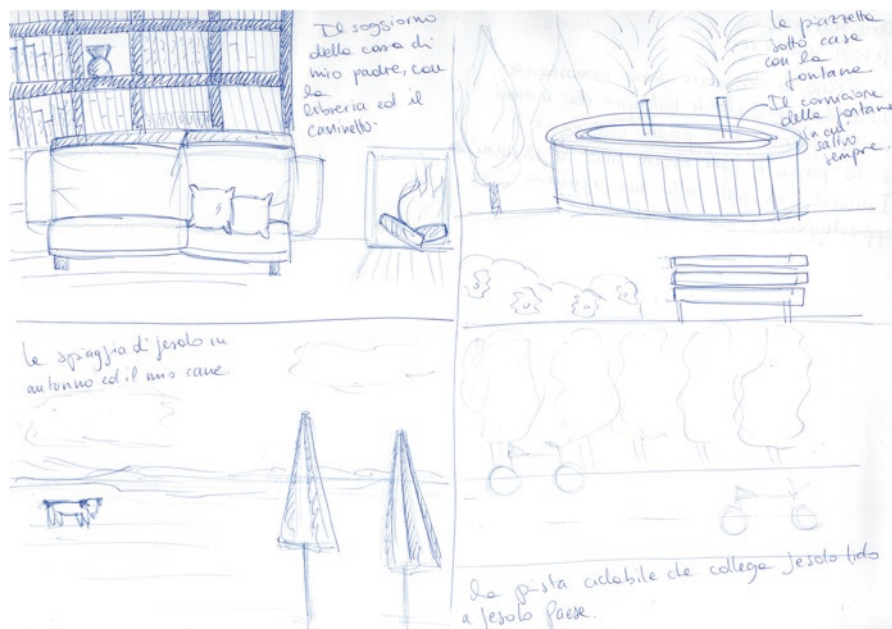


Fig. 11 An example of a photographic series



Fig. 12 Photographic series and stylized map

composition of the internal elements are concerned. As far as medium-supports are concerned, contemporary semiotics helps in clarifying this dimension and describing the strategy of enunciation used by the person interviewed.<sup>12</sup> In any semiotic object we can in fact distinguish between the medium-support on which the representation is traced and the writing technique used. Jacques Fontanille (2008), in the attempt to show how the enunciation can transform in different ways the medium-support of the inscription, has proposed a distinction between material and formal medium-support. With the former term, the French semiotician means the actual medium-support of the semiotic inscription: in this case, the drawing paper and the blue pen used by the person interviewed. The latter term indicates instead the result of the process of enunciation: in this case, the drawing provides an imitation of a photographic impression and photographic paper. Maria Giulia Dondero (2011) has suggested that to the idea of medium-support one should add an analogous concept able to designate the writing technique. The French term that has been chosen is *apport*, as this usefully points to the relationship of complementarity that connects writing techniques and medium-support. In this particular representation, it can be said that the subject's hand-writing on the drawing paper (actual medium-support and *apport*) simulates a photographic impression and a photographic paper (formal medium-support and *apport*).

In order to point out the formal characteristics that justify a comparison with photography, it is however important to go beyond the mere impression of similarity. In this case, two elements seem to confirm a contiguity with the practice and the instruments of photography. Firstly, what we have here is not an imitation of an individual photo, but consists in the reproduction of a photographic series: this difference makes the simulation of the format of photographic paper more evident. Secondly, another significant element is represented by the width of the shots and the size of the elements represented. Although it is not possible to measure them, they give the impression that a standard photographic lens (35 or 50 mm) has been imitated. The difference between this drawing and the ones belonging to the first group is evident. What at first glance appears as merely casual resemblance can be instead identified as a conscious choice of enunciation: the representation simulates the work of the photographic device and its medium-support.

The distinction between *allographic* and *autographic* arts elaborated by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art* (1968) proves very helpful in measuring the gap between material and simulated medium-supports. The allographic arts include those typologies of writing characterized by a strong codification of their marks. For example, the musical notation in a score or the alphabetic notation in a novel belong

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<sup>12</sup>This image evokes the cinematographic technique of the *split-screen*, in which different scenes are showed simultaneously thanks to the division of the screen in separate sections. Three of the images that compose this drawing confirm this impression, because they portray movement: the fire of the fireplace in the first, the dog in the third and the bicycle in the fourth. As we will see, a representation that gives the impression of simulating one or more media genres in an incomplete way is a constitutive feature of our sub-corpus. For now, it should be noted that in both hypotheses (photographic series and *split-screen*) the statute of the simulated image seems to be photographic.

to this category, as each copy of the original text can be considered equally authentic: we would never doubt the authenticity of the copy of a novel that we have purchased in a bookshop. On the contrary, in autographic arts the author's gesture corresponds to the characterizing trait of the textual result, making therefore pertinent the distinction between the original and the copies. This is, for example, the case of painting. According to Dondero, photography represents a special case: if on the one hand it is true that, differently from a drawing, the photographic impression is realized automatically by the photographic device, on the other hand the position of the body of the subject, the frame and the object chosen are strongly personal. The technical reproducibility of the individual photography adds to the complexity of this medium. For these reasons, Pierluigi Basso Fossali and Maria Giulia Dondero (2011) define photography as an autographic art that produces multiple textuality.<sup>13</sup>

What increases the complexity of this drawing is the author's choice to represent specific views that are identified using verbal language: the front room of the house of "my father"; the fountain in the small square on whose ledge "I always used to climb"; the beach "with my dog". The process of enunciation adopted by the person interviewed can be described with greater precision: the subject imagines and represents his place of origin as a series of photographic views, which are further personalized through verbal language. This choice helps us to achieve a better understanding of the concept of media genre, and of the way in which the subjects interviewed have appropriated, deconstructed and summarized it in original ways. In particular, the classification of medium-supports, writing techniques (*apport*) and devices appears to be particularly useful to describe cases of simulation. Indeed, for simulation to happen some elements need to be reproduced faithfully, while others must necessarily differ – otherwise we would end up with exact copies. Therefore, it is not surprising that in our corpus it is difficult to find a specific and complete media genre.

These reflections can be applied to another case, represented in Fig. 12.

This drawing differs from the previous one in three respects. First of all, verbal language is used solely for the localization of geographical spaces. Secondly, the arrangement of the frames realizes a *photographic album* effect, because the photos and the frames overlap each other. This apparently banal detail deserves to be analyzed further. Between the second and third photograph there is a space filled with black pencil strokes to highlight a spatial as well as conceptual separation. The fact that the person interviewed has simulated a void separating the images is notable, as it represents a unique case in our sub-corpus and, in fact, among all the drawings object of our research. It can be hypothesized that the author of the drawing filled this spatial void with pencil to signal a variation of the simulated material: if the frames surround the simulated photographs, it is then necessary to fill the empty space separating them, to make clear that such space belongs to the surface on which the photographs are placed. If the author had wanted to represent mere drawings, he would not have needed to separate the representations nor to draw attention to the space that separates them.

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<sup>13</sup>With regard to the semiotics of photography, see Floch (1986), Basso Fossali and Dondero (2011), Pozzato (2012).



Finally, we should note the montage between different types of shots, belonging to different photographic genres. In the upper left part there is a landscape view of the Castle of Ussel in Aosta. This is followed by a shot of the entrance of the house, and then by one of the inside of the kitchen of the same house. The second row of images contains two representations: the first one is a landscape view that includes a park; the second shot takes us inside a building, more precisely in the living room of the house. In the lower part of the drawing there is a simplified map of the road network, which indicates further points of interest, different from those represented in the images. In addition to some aspects of photography that we have already discussed with regard to the previous case study, a strategy that puts together public places of interest and private places seems to be adopted here. The first series of images is particularly interesting: between the landscape with the castle and the kitchen of his house, the author has drawn an image of the entrance to the same house, which in a way acts as a threshold. The subjective character that emerges from the drawing is the result of enunciations modulations which, starting from the simulation of the photographic format, move back and forth between a more impersonal and public perspective – showing shared places of interest – and one that reveals the private dimension.<sup>14</sup>

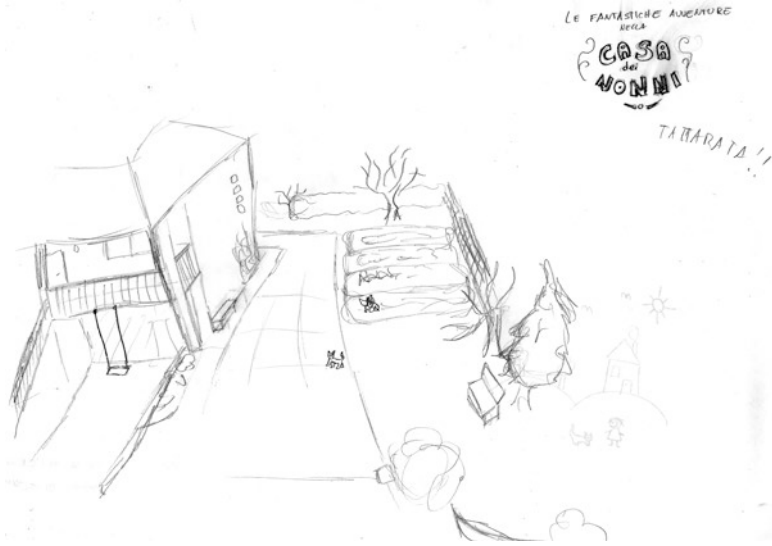
### 5.5 *Reinterpretation of Genre: The Sitcom and Establishing Shot*

Some of the representations in our sub-corpus seem to suggest that, in order to simulate a text that belongs to a different media genre, it is often sufficient to imitate only some of the elements that characterize such genre, as the habits of the spectator will intervene to evoke it in its entirety, thanks to the principle of *pars pro toto*.<sup>15</sup> An interesting example of this kind of process can be found in Fig. 13, in which verbal language contributes to modify the content of the whole drawing, which would otherwise fit into the landscape genre.

The drawing shows a shot from above that represents a house with an internal courtyard, in which it is possible to recognize a swing, two dogs, some bare trees and a bench. The drawing is devoid of color, toponyms or any other indications that could be useful to identify the house's location. And yet, the text in the right upper part contributes to a *resemantization* of the whole composition, activating some inter-textual scripts that modify the drawing's reading: "The fantastic adventures of the HOUSE OF THE GRANDPARENTS" (Fig. 14). Both the enlarged font and the ornaments that surround the text provide a re-mediation of what could be the title of

<sup>14</sup>This oscillation between private and public dimensions confirms the distinction proposed by Pozzato in her essay in this volume, (chapter "Genres of Maps of Places of Origin: A Semiotic Survey") between the axis of social space and the one of individual space. In this case, the opposition between the two is not solved, although there is an attempt to achieve a synthesis between them.

<sup>15</sup>With regard to the mechanism of *pars pro toto*, see Eisenstein (1937), pp. 128–129; eng. trans.



**Fig. 13** A case of simulation of establishing shot

**Fig. 14** A detail of the previous illustration showing the logo that is reminiscent of the one of a sit-com



a sit-com. The point of view chosen, which at first glance appears very neutral, can be likened to what in filmmaking is called an *establishing shot*: a long shot indicating where the scene takes place, generally used before presenting a sequence of internal shots, in order to give a setting for the action. In this drawing, the view of the courtyard and of the external part of the house serves as an introduction to the adventures that presumably happen inside. The onomatopoeic text “Tattarata!!” underneath the title showed in Fig. 14 reinforces the impression of the sit-com effect and excludes other possible readings – e.g. one that sees the verbal text not as the title of a sit-com, but as the text of a comic. This short text recalls the opening theme of

a light entertainment television program. Taken together the noun “adventures”, the ornaments and the round font – along with the “explosive” onomatopoeia – create an effect of light-heartedness, providing this otherwise generic composition with a strong subjective charge, achieved through the montage technique and the use of inter-textual elements.

## 5.6 Zoom Vision and Graphic Competences

In our progression towards higher degrees of personalization of the *bricolage* techniques and of the simulation of technical formats, we come now to the visualization technique which is most frequently used in our sub-corpus, one that is not connected to a specific medium-support: zoom. The following image (Fig. 15) provides an example of this technique.

The zoom affects three orders of representation and three different moments: in the lower left part there is a stylized version of the whole of the Italian peninsula surrounded by the sea. The upper part of this first view is highlighted with a red undulated line and a square of the same color. From this geometrical form, a line is traced that links it with another, larger square, in which the same area is represented in a larger scale. In the upper and lower parts of this second representation are two toponyms: “Alto Adige” and “Trentino” respectively. This second image also shows



Fig. 15 An example of simulation of zoom vision

some rivers and another area that is marked in red with a toponym pointing to another enlarged writing stating: “Bressanone Brixen”. The rest of the drawing illustrates the result of this double zooming process using a scale of representation similar to the one of the other drawings in our corpus: it is possible to see three houses, the road network and some hills in the back. The author interviewed seems *to bricoler* those elements of the place of origin that are most closely connected with his direct experience – e.g. his house in the countryside and his school – associating them with strictly geographical elements: both the macro level of the national territory and the intermediate one of the region are clearly considered essential to characterize the space represented as a place of identity.

This peculiar technique of simulation leads to further reflections about the skills of the authors interviewed. First of all, it should be noted that, in the same way as the legend, the zoom technique is not normally connected to a specific medium-support or device: it can be found in cartographical representations as well as scientific publications. Secondly, none of the authors interviewed had graphic competences derived from learning this technique. For this reasons, we believe that the series of drawings in which the zoom technique is used demonstrates that the media archive, on which the authors interviewed have based their enunciations, can lead to the development of effective compositional skills, despite being normally explored in a passive way, i.e. as spectators. In other words, our corpus shows that through a process of enunciation and imagination, this knowledge acquired passively can be transformed into practical knowledge, which can be used actively.

## 5.7 *Visual Exploration Paths*

The last section of our analysis focuses on the most complex cases of montage. This group takes to its extreme consequences what we have illustrated so far: the simulation of different media texts ceases to be recognizable and acquires the characters of visual exploration. These representations focus on the life path of the person interviewed, but they also impose a specific reading of it, modulating the reception according to a specific project of enunciation. The first case analyzed seems to follow to the letter Eisenstein’s reflections on the paradoxical effect of simultaneity and succession created by some montage configurations: “in the consciousness of the perceiver, segment is piled on segment, and their incongruences of color, lightning, outline, scale, movement, etc., are what gives that sense of dynamic thrust and impulse which generates a sense of movement” (Eisenstein 1937, p. 86; eng. trans.). For this reason, according to Eisenstein, “we should in no way be confused by the following reflections, which concern the *simultaneous conjoint presence* on one canvas of elements, which are, in essence, *the successive phases of a whole process*” (*Ibidem*).

Figure 16 provides a very effective example of this kind of intermedial *bricolage*. If one had to relate this drawing to a recognizable cultural model, this might be that



Fig. 16 Succession of episodes in a single image

of those biblical paintings showing different moments in the life a character, as it is the case in *L'Adorazione dei Magi* (1423) by Gentile da Fabriano in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.<sup>16</sup> Here the author interviewed offers his self-representation in six moments, highlighting his position with the use of the color pink. Each scene portrays him busy with different activities and in different moments of his childhood, allowing the composition to be divided into single episodes. Differently from the majority of the drawings in our sub-corpus, the dominant characteristic here is not descriptive, but narrative: the author is represented while performing specific activities, instead of simply being portrayed in the places where he grew up. In random order, we see him while playing *campana* with some of his friends in front of the village church; hiding behind a low wall while playing *hide-and-seek*; at the seaside playing with sand; behind his house picking up flowers; in the mountains having lunch with his family. Partial views such as these produce, as Eisenstein has noted, a general image of a happy childhood, in which playing was the predominant activity.

At this point of our analysis, a legitimate question about the statute of the operation of simulation could arise: we have just compared this representation to biblical pictures, but couldn't it also be compared with comics? Our conclusion is that neither of these hypotheses is correct, no matter how plausible they seem. The ambiguous nature of the source of inspiration is significant in itself, as it is coherent

<sup>16</sup>This method was widely used in Renaissance painting. It was typically employed in the *predelle*, i.e. those images which surround the main representation and usually narrate the life of the biblical character.

with the description of intermedial *bricolage* that we have proposed. What is central here is not the fact that the drawing resembles one or more media genres. According to Montani, intermedial imagination is a mental process located *in-between* technical forms and media dimensions: it appropriates the models or parts of models which are most useful for its purposes of enunciation. It is not surprising therefore that the expedient used here cannot be traced back to a single model; in fact, it is the process of imagination, appropriation and intermedial enunciation described above that provides a personal and original re-elaboration of the genres which are mobilized. The media archive offers a multitude of different models, but the single task before each interviewed subject does not require him to choose one of these and reproduce it faithfully. On the contrary, as this case shows, the subject is able to select those components that he considers most suitable for his purposes. It is not important whether these components come from a biblical painting or a comic book. What is important is the process of abstraction which the drawing reveals, a process through which a limited component belonging to multiple media genres – i.e. the succession of episodes within a single representation – is selected and re-utilized for the enunciation of one’s place of origin.

We can now move to the analysis of the next and final case.

The drawing in Fig. 17 is clearly configured as a map, as it represents the outline of various nations connected by vectors and identified by short verbal texts. These

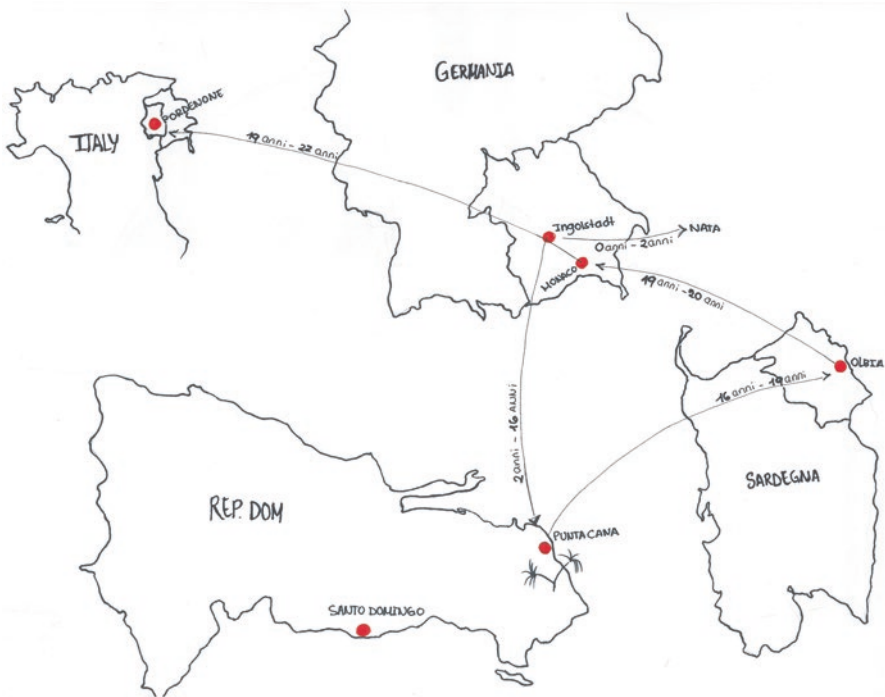


Fig. 17 The plan for a retrospective journey

arrow vectors constitute an expedient that is often used in cinema to represent travelling from a nation to another without showing the actual process. This representational solution often uses ellipsis, cartographical representation and usually a stylized aircraft. The significant peculiar feature of the drawing is that it does not represent the plan for a future travel, but a retrospective plan that summarizes a journey that has already occurred. Each of the vectors indicating the places that have been visited contains a verbal reference to the time period during which the person interviewed lived there. The representation shows that he was born and lived for 2 years in Ingonstand, then moved to Puntacana where he remained until the age of 16, before moving to Olbia until he was 19, and so forth. What at first glance looks like a journey in space is in fact an existential journey. The place of origin that this stylized representation shows is by definition a place that cannot be summarized: Pozzato has rightly noted that this drawing does not seem to communicate the idea of uprooting, rather a sort of “euphoria of mobility”. It is perhaps a representation of the very idea of travelling: a series of stops spaced between different ages and different places, each filled with cities, lived experiences and specific emotions that are not represented but left to our imagination.

## 6 Conclusions

This chapter has shown that a large part of the subjects interviewed have used montage procedures in drawing their places of origin. Within this sub-corpus, the majority of cases provide examples of more radical montages, which juxtapose and simulate different media elements. The general principles of montage elaborated by Eisenstein and the original reading of such principles provided by Montani have been used to identify the connection between imagination and semiotic enunciation. In both cases, the cultural archive – or Encyclopedia – provides the material necessary for the process of representation.

The different logic behind the procedures of montage and those used by the people interviewed has led to a re-reading of the concept of *bricolage*. With this notion, we have described a process of enunciation that is made up of three distinct moments: first of all, the subject selects models that are readily-available; then, it engages in a creative dialogue with such models; finally, it pragmatically appropriates them. We have noted that the following media components have been used: visualization techniques (such as legend), inscription devices (photographic camera), medium-supports (photographic paper, computer screen), narrative techniques (establishing shot and television logo), as well as other flexible expedients that have no privileged relationship with specific media (zoom vision).

For these reasons, the simulations realized by the subjects interviewed have led to a redefinition of the concept of media genre. The drawings of our corpus show that, both in thought and practice, our conception of media is different from the one that emerges from theoretical reflections. Our analysis has shown that such conception is developed internally around editable elements which depend on the specific

aim of enunciation. We have described the specific use of these elements by reducing the traditional separation between spectatorial and pragmatic competences.

From such a complex corpus it is not possible to draw simple conclusions on the representations of places of origin and the lived experiences that inspire them. The relationship of attachment and distance that characterizes them is linked intricately with the modes of the representation. Some drawings convey the value of a happy childhood despite using narrative stereotypes, while others, even if aesthetically remarkable, do not communicate any strong feeling. In our opinion, the peculiar value of this corpus lies precisely in this complex negotiation between the unique and personal character of the representation and the public and stereotypical ones. In this dialogue it is possible to identify the peculiar subjectivity of the authors of the drawings: through a mediation between public and private, original and stereotypical, past and present, these maps attest to a continuous work of modulation and convocation.

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# The Representation of the Places of Origin: A Geographical Perspective

Emanuele Frixia

**Abstract** This essay provides a geo-cartographic reading of maps of places of origin. Taking inspiration from the etymology of word map – that is to say “an object used to carry things” – it proposes some analogies between a group of drawings that have been collected during this project and some forms of cartographic representation. Models and references taken from the *History of Cartography* will be used to compare the most significant of these maps with specific historical cartographic genres; particular attention will be given to the point of view and the shift from figurative to abstract drawing occurring in the process of narrating space.

This essay shows that, regardless of forms of representation that necessarily provide the starting point of our discussion, maps of places of origin provide a perspective that recalls Edward Soja’s concept of *Thirdspace*. That is to say, these representations are simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical models of representation, which are physical, mental and social at the same time. The aim of this analysis is to provide a wider geographical perspective on the meaning of place that goes beyond the reductive logic of Euclidian space.

## 1 Introduction

When we asked students to draw their own place of origin, we hardly expected that the visual texts that they would produce were going to be so different from current notions, impressions, manipulations and ideas of space. And yet, in retrospect, we should not have taken for granted that the visual representations of their place of origin would necessarily be maps; similarly, we could not have predicted the level of generalization and abstraction of the image present in these drawings. It was only after collecting and comparing the complete group of drawings that a series of

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genres, tendencies and models (*patterns*)<sup>1</sup> became evident. As a geographer, I have not only tried to provide a geographic perspective on this material, but also to show how these representations raised some crucial questions.

Firstly, I wondered whether these texts were simply drawings or could be seen as maps representing a territory. If so which were the features that could be seen as connecting this corpus to a cartographic logic (Farinelli 1992)? What could these visual texts tell us that was new in relation to those ideas of place and space that have been widely discussed in geographic literature (Tuan 1974, 1977; Pickles 2004; Pile and Thrift 1995; Massey 2005; Crang and Trift 2000; Cresswell 1996; Cosgrove 2001; Duncan and Ley 1993)?

With these questions in mind, I have made a selection from the corpus, privileging those visual texts that were best placed from an interdisciplinary perspective to provide an answer to the above questions. At first sight, some of these visual texts appeared to be just drawings: visual depictions of the idea of the place of origin showing neither technical expertise nor cartographic knowledge. Nevertheless, the majority of the drawings provided representations strongly influenced by cartography. This difference between the anticipated and actual results was due in part to the ambiguity of our request<sup>2</sup> and in part to the heterogeneous personal and cultural background as well as knowledge and skill of the interviewees.

From a strictly technical-cartographic perspective, it would have been possible to classify our corpus through a series of features, variables and recurrences. However, we chose to associate our selection with the idea of geographic space, providing in this way an explicitly qualitative perspective.

After listing the reasons and criteria according to which these drawings can be seen as maps, we will consider the analogies between them and some particular forms of cartographic representations, with particular reference to historical cartographic genres. Moving from the definition of maps in the introduction of *The History of Cartography* as “the primary medium for transmitting ideas and knowledge about space” (Harley and Woodward 1987, p. xv), we will indicate the specific treatments of space representing place of origin in our visual texts. It is precisely this discourse on the relationship between drawing and space that ultimately provides an interpretation of our visual texts. Here Soja’s notion of *Thirdspace* (1997) is useful in providing a critical reading of maps of places of origin as complex forms of representation that opens up a wider geographical perspective on the meaning of place, one that challenges the reductive logic of Euclidean space.

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<sup>1</sup>For semiotic genre and classification, see chapter “[Intermedial Editing in the Representations of Places of Origin](#)”, in this volume.

<sup>2</sup>We asked those who took part in the project to draw “something resembling a map” specifying that this drawing had to include their own house (see chapter “[Introduction](#)”, in this volume).

## 2 Maps of Places of Origin

All the representations discussed here are undoubtedly maps in at least the etymological meaning and implications of the use of this word.<sup>3</sup> The word map comes from the Latin *mappa* – though its origin is Phoenician; it was used by Quintilian to mean the tablecloth or napkin used by guests to wrap up left-overs to be taken with them. It is on these linen cloths – more resistant than paper – that for centuries terrestrial space was represented. Though the material used for maps has subsequently changed, the word has remained the same to this day.

The original meaning of the term – a piece of cloth used to take things away – is important, because it is precisely this kind of action that defines the representation of places of origin. Through their spatialization on paper and with the aid of memory that preserves some of the features of the places of origin, these maps become “objects which have the properties of being *mobile*, but also *immutable*, *presentable*, *readable* and *combinable* with one another” (Latour 1990, p. 26). Each of these maps is a projection of the individual, an act of imagination<sup>4</sup> mediated by memory that combines “remembering” and “imagining”. Here, the ability to represent completely or partially the objective and measurable space of modern cartography becomes of secondary importance, losing the central role it had during the modern period.

In this regard, it is important to point out that in the last decades the definition of geographical map has undergone radical transformation.<sup>5</sup> Initially this definition emphasized exact correspondence between earth forms and their spatial representations, later the focus of attention shifted, first to the very elements of the representation and then to the communicative process transforming maps into texts. Through a circular movement, the focus then returned to the elements of the representation in order to deconstruct them. Starting from the 1990s, this deconstruction has included new forms and technologies devised to represent geographical reality. “The objectivism of scientific cartography”, “the subjective nature of maps”, “distortion, error and propaganda maps”, are the three conditions that, according to John Pickles, can be seen as enacting that “crisis of representation” (Pickles 2004, pp. 32–47) that has led to the positions that have informed geographical debate during the second half of the twentieth century.

As a consequence of these shifts, the meaning geographers and cartographers have given to maps has changed over time, and along with these the forms and the meaning of geographical representations. Given this critical background, the ambi-

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<sup>3</sup>Harley and Woodward have noted that ever since antiquity the meaning associated with the word “map” has changed with time according to the culture in which this was used (Harley and Woodward 1987, xvi), (see Harvey 1980). Their definition of this term in the preface of the first volume of *History of Cartography* is wide and all inclusive: “maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or event in the human world” (ibidem).

<sup>4</sup>See Bonazzi (2011, pp.109–113), Olsson (2007, pp. 117–235), Vaughan (2010, 93–102), Casey (2002).

<sup>5</sup>For an illustration of part of this development, see Torresani, Lodovisi (2005, pp. 415–421).

guity of our project task turned out to be an advantage, because it led to a multiplicity of ideas of space that are differently codified in respect of the grammar of cartography. As it will be noted, the maps of places of origin we will discuss show a wide variety of cartographic genres that unknowingly connect to the history of geographical representations.

When faced with images that are the product of heterogeneous techniques, abilities and experiences it is necessary to find reference points that can orient their study and classification. In this specific case this is represented by Catherine Delano Smith's idea of spatial representation. According to Delano Smith, this complies with the following three characteristics<sup>6</sup>: "the artist's intent was indeed to portray the relationship of objects in space; [...] all the constituent images are contemporaneous in execution; and [...] they are cartographically appropriate (Delano Smith 1987, p. 61). This theory has been used to classify the first geographical representations during the prehistoric period and is suitable to be adapted to a diverse corpus such as ours.

Having ascertained that the text-images that we have gathered are maps that, albeit in different ways, and through the employment of different abilities and techniques, provide a connection between objects and space, the last preliminary consideration concerns the ways these visual texts have been realized. Maps of places of origin can be considered sketches of mental maps,<sup>7</sup> types of representation that have caught the attention of geographers during the 1970s (Gould 1973, 1974; Tuan 1975, 1977). Though this interest arose as a consequence of the *behavioural revolution* (Gold 1980) before the so-called geographical cultural turn, the first sign of this critical approach can be seen in Kevin Lynch's pioneering study entitled *The Image of the City* that employed the mental images of inhabitants of American metropolis to construct a grammar of the city. Though mental maps are still a very popular genre in geographical and urban studies,<sup>8</sup> we have decided to approach our corpus through a different perspective that instead of focusing on the perceptive and experiential features<sup>9</sup> of places, concentrates on the graphic and verbal forms used by interviewees.

What follows is an attempt to associate some of the representations of places of origin to forms of cartographic representations by focusing attention on the following: point of view, drawing techniques and the employment of abstract forms of representation. Analysis will show that, despite the employment of techniques that change the subject's point of view to a point when this is occluded by only apparently objective forms of representation, these maps of places of origin point to a lived space that emerges from the reconstruction of a wider discourse about features of place.

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<sup>6</sup>Delano Smith's criteria represent a "new beginning" as far as prehistoric cartography is concerned. These are also relevant studies of heterogeneous material and for the creation of a new theoretical approach: "a new theoretical framework may have to be created for what is in effect a new subject" (Delano Smith 1987, p. 55).

<sup>7</sup>Tuan stressed that "mental phenomena are made more 'tangible' by relating them to real life situations (Tuan 1975, p. 206).

<sup>8</sup>On this, see Nausicaa Pezzoni's (2013) recent study on maps of the city of Milan made by migrants.

<sup>9</sup>See Bonazzi's and Nardelli's chapters "Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries" and "The Role of Perception in the Representation of Places of Origin: Some Remarks on Movement", in this volume.

### 3 Point of View in the Representation of Place

To provide a broad background for the interpretation of the images of our corpus and order them according to a qualitative method, we have decided to compare them with some studies of *cartographic history* and *critical cartography*. Cartographic history, in particular, is a useful tool to study the relationship between people, images and territory ever since its inception. Exemplary in this respect is the most ancient geographic representation we know (Fig. 1), the wall painting in Çatal Hüyük in southern Anatolia dated around 6150 BC. This represents the urban landscape of Çatal Hüyük, a settlement of between 6000 and 10,000 inhabitants. The painting provides a panoramic view of a city that remains unique in the period before 1200 (see Soja 2000, pp. 39–42). Its image provides an aerial view of the buildings of this Neolithic site traced with almost geometrical precision. Over the towers, the volcano Hasan Dag is shown erupting “represented through an axonometric projection, as if this was located opposite the viewer” (Farinelli 2003, p. 153).

The rotation of the internal point of view showed in this painting not only speaks of the technical competence of its author, but also provides the map with an abstract feature: the buildings are in fact represented as if they were seen from the volcano (Ibidem). Further, it is interesting to note that it was precisely the eruptions of this volcano that provided a source of obsidian, a material that was of key importance for this site’s economy; excavations have provided proof of a differentiation and specialization of labour involved in the production and exchange of goods made with this material. For this reason the representation of the volcano achieved through the rotation of the point of view is symbolic of its importance for trade as well as the whole life of this settlement. As Soja has written:

Nature is to be both feared and propitiated, for it can provide that “embarrassment of riches” that every civilized urban culture depends on. Nature does not just exist outside the city at Çatal Hüyük, it is also incorporated within its territorial culture and symbolic zones as a vital part of the local economy and society, signalling the beginning of the social production of a “second nature” intricately involved with the urbanization process (Soja 2000, p. 42)

The map of Çatal Hüyük therefore is “much more than the first landscape image”, it is “an act of urban self-awareness, awareness of the specificity of the nature of a city as a living organism” (Farinelli 2003, p. 152).

The relation between the value of the elements represented and techniques of representations is one of the most significant issues for our corpus. As with the above map, this relation is often made explicit through the internal rotation of the point of view. The lack of a geometrical gaze and of a projection technique that

**Fig. 1** Çatal Hüyük, wall painting





**Fig. 2** The rotation of the point of view

could unify the representational components provide signs of frequently encountered inability to reproduce a uniform space. In this respect, the map representing San Vito in Spilamberto (Fig. 2) is interesting. Here, like in the Çatal Hüyük mural, both the aerial and the horizontal point of view are included.

As far as the point of view is concerned, the employment of this internal differentiation is a key factor for a geographic discourse of places of origin. In fact, in Fig. 2 almost all the objects represented are accompanied by written captions that specify functions for buildings and natural elements alike: playground, kindergarten, Nello's Conad, Guerro river, Guido's restaurant etc. In respect of urban maps, this provides a canonical form of representation. The only objects that are subjected to a change of point of view and lose verbal connotations are the village parish church and the home of the author of the map. In this drawing, the place of origin is re-composed by a differentiation of values of places according the author's life experiences that unconsciously gives different degree of importance to the elements of his personal landscape.

The value of the function of the two buildings and the (more or less) pondered choice of employing two different points of view suggests that a distinction is made between *insider* and *outsider*,<sup>10</sup> following Denis Cosgrove's theory (1984), later

<sup>10</sup>The word insider "according to our terminology means somebody who lives in a place; what he/she sees corresponds to his/her environment and for this reason he/she does not need to single out something in particular. The topographer's job can be described as an attempt to transform what he sees for the first time into something that he knows well" (Farinelli 2003, p. 40).

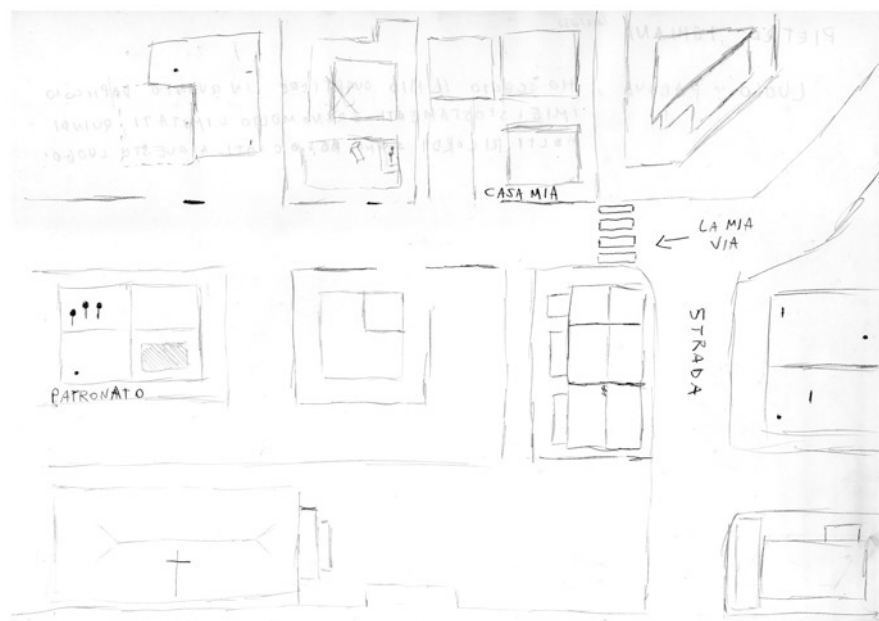


Fig. 3 My street

expanded by Franco Farinelli (2003, p. 40), with specific reference to the designation of geographical elements.<sup>11</sup> Cosgrove's attention focuses on differing points of view with reference to the relationship between person and landscape. The latter for him is a way of perceiving a specific local scene. Farinelli takes this up with reference to the act of cartographic production and the denomination of its elements. He refers to landscape as "a mental image the cartographer gets rid of as soon as he sets to work". With specific reference to our corpus, we are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand the mental image of the place of origin is traced within the perceiving and experiential environment of the people involved, and on the other hand there is the need to map that same place in order to provide its spatial representation.

Here, the association between names and objects disappears when these have a particular value, and for this reason there is no need to give them a name and set them apart from the others. An example of this is the house and the parish church in Fig. 2. The use of the expression "my street" in Fig. 3 (showing a Padova quarter) is

<sup>11</sup> I am referring to the story of Mount Somía. This tells the story of a topographer sent to the bergamasco area; he asks a peasant the name of the mountain. The peasant answers: "so mia" which in the bergamasco dialect means "I don't know" (Bonapace 1990, p. 14) (see Farinelli 2003, p. 38). Farinelli notes that "the peasant who lives at the foot of the mountain does not know its name because that mountain is part of his place ... for him there was no other mountain, and for this reason he does not need to distinguish between one mountain and another, for him Somía is not just a mountain, rather *the* mountain, the only possible one" (Farinelli 2003, p. 40).



significant in this respect as it shows there is no need to associate a proper name to the street in which one has grown up.

The scene of the place of origin is an insider's where verbal specifications become expressions of an experiential narrative. Here a continuing tension occurs between the need for representation of the place on the one hand and the mediation of experience on the other, the condition of the insider and that of the outsider, the power of memory – only apparently devoid of space – and the tendency to structure space according a cartographic scheme.

As already mentioned, the drawing of one's place of origin brings forth some geographical reflections in relation to the idea of landscape and cartographic representation. The possibility of simplifying the feature of a place through an abstract scheme is frequently influenced by experience and perception, and necessarily mediated by memory. The representation technique used becomes functional to map's "double voice",<sup>12</sup> which mixes together different ideas of space. The most frequently found in our corpus is the geometrical and Hodological space (see Bonazzi's chapter "[Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries](#)", in this volume).<sup>13</sup>

Interesting in this respect is Fig. 4, which represents the area of Montepastore<sup>14</sup> on the Bolognese Appennine. In this case the co-presence of two points of views and the verbal captions reproduce the double articulation of space. The two perspectives – the vertical one that reduces buildings to outlines and the horizontal one that includes some elements of the landscape and the author's house – coexist in the drawing. As in Fig. 2 there is an almost complete absence of geographical names and a constant reference to the experiential features of the places: "the Mazzini's home with a very big garden where we sometimes used to go to retrieve our ball"; "the pine trees under which we built the hut"; "the hedge behind which there was a narrow and cosy passageway". This description will be considered once again at the end of this article in order comment further on the features of this lived space.

The last part of that paragraph refers to those maps that in the history of cartography are described as representations that during the Renaissance translated the geographical idea of landscape into images (Cosgrove 1988, 1984, 2004; Casey 2002; Fiorani 2005). Let us first consider the necessary conditions for a landscape to exist: "an observer, a mountain, a panorama and a sunny or – at the very least

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<sup>12</sup>According to Brian Harley in all cartographic representations there is an inner voice of the mapmaker and an outer voice of the mapmaker patron. The relationship between these two voices can mobilize ideological and power related issues. The relationship between these two voices in the process of producing the map has been discussed by Denis Wood who writes that the mapmaker is not autonomous, that the history of maps cannot be written as a hero saga from the mapmaker's perspective, that the interests of the patron are always a part of the story – an essential part of the story – where no doubt interests has some of the sense of curiosity, but far more that of self-interest, of personal advantage, of things in which rights, claims or shares are held, as in commercial interests, military interests, political interests" (Wood 2002, p. 146) (see Ferretti 2014, pp. 167–172).

<sup>13</sup>Hodological space is a lived space and contrasts with "objective" space also called Euclidean space (Janni 1984, 94). See Bonazzi's chapter "[Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries](#)", in this volume.

<sup>14</sup>The author told us that she did not "draw all the village as she mainly *lived* in those areas".

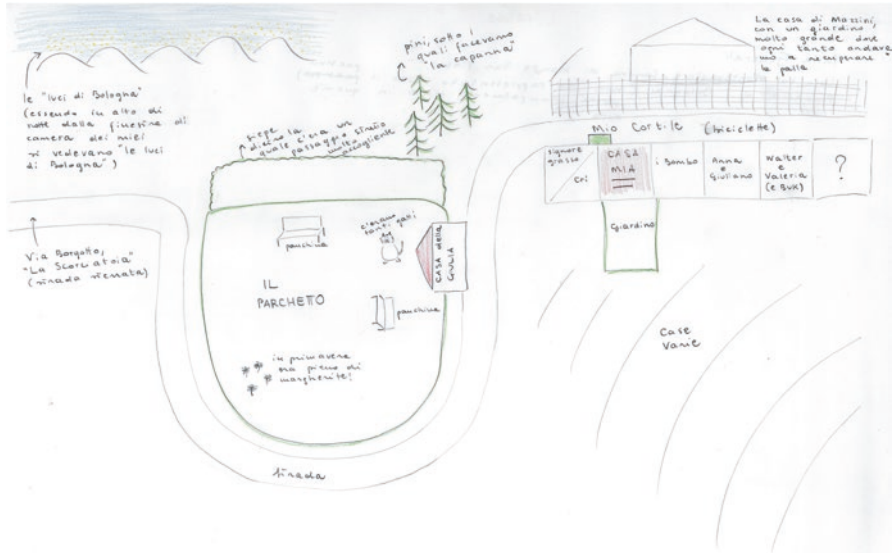


Fig. 4 The insider's space

bright – day” (Farinelli 2003, p. 52). The point of view is (once again) positioned outside the representation so that “it includes the whole urban extension ... and provides a hint of the conventional nature of the point of view” itself (Farinelli 1992, p. 29). They are precisely the perspectival views of cities and “bird’s eye view”<sup>15</sup> maps that in our study of the reproduction of cartographic genres in representation of places of origin provide an intermediate mode of representing the geographical space.<sup>16</sup>

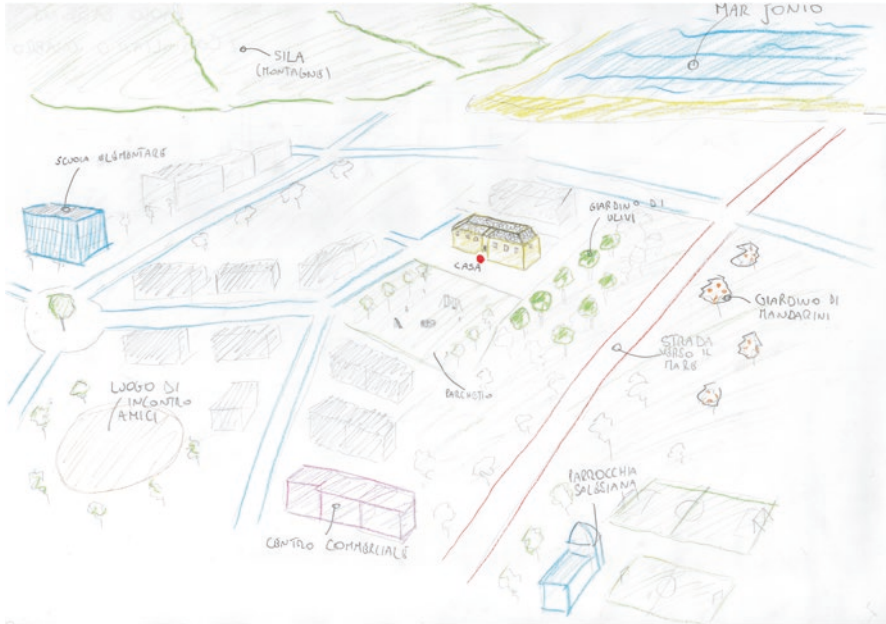
Figure 5 reproduces the graphic effect typical of picturesque landscape views. This is a map of Corigliano Calabro (CS), including natural elements, the Sila mountain and the Jonio sea.<sup>17</sup> The point of view is one of an ideal observer placed in a privileged position that commands a view that is better than one can experience through direct observation. The device of the shifting point of view is shown only partially by some internal captions.

In conclusion, the point of view of the representations analyzed is one of the most significant characteristics of our corpus; it provides a clue concerning compositional skill and the degree of self-consciousness of the technique used. More importantly, it represents a key instrument for the analysis and conceptualization of space in representations of places of origin.

<sup>15</sup> See Nuti (1996).

<sup>16</sup> It is important to bear in mind that in these kinds of representations the point of view is always made explicit by some graphic device that provides instructions concerning the vantage point and hence functions as simulacra of the enunciator.

<sup>17</sup> On the mode of representation in a picturesque work of art, see Luis Marin (2001).



**Fig. 5** View of Corigliano Calabro

## 4 Drawing and Relational Space

The rotation of the internal point of view marks another fundamental turn in the history of cartography, namely the “abandonment of a perspectival technique aimed at providing a urban image that corresponds to the one that can be gained through direct vision” (Farinelli 1992, 29), in order to opt for a vertical point of view. This shift – which can be dated between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century – also marks the increasingly popularity of the geometrical signifier that begins to systematically replace the drawn sign and consequently the transition “from concrete to abstract, from personal to impersonal”: “signs lose their clarity and above all they cease to refer to themselves, as their language has lost any contact and resemblance with the objects they refer to, it has lost its naturalness and has become an artificial code” (Ibidem). As already noted in the previous figures, in our corpus this transition is blurred and it produces overlappings both in the representational techniques and in the ideas of space it produces.

Map drawing is the object of a particular discourse precisely because it concerns a crucial moment in the representation of space. The history of cartography is strictly connected with drawing because before geographical information systems, this provided the basis of mapmaking and also works of art. It is important to remember that between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century drawing was still used for representations of territorial boundaries.



**Fig. 6** Portion of the boundary of the Duchy of Burgundy, 1460: Archives départementales de la Côte-d’Or/B 263, permission granted

Let us consider for example Fig. 6, which represents a “portion of the boundary of the Duchy of Burgundy”. This map, that dates back to 1460, is the result of a disputed boundary in 1444 between Duke Philip the Good and King Charles VII of France. The mapmaker uses the rotation of the point of view and a figurative kind of graphic based on resemblance, despite the fact that this map concerns boundaries, that is to say geographical elements that, starting from the end of the seventeenth century, are beginning to be more and more closely connected to the representation of a geometrical space. Let us now consider a map drawn almost a century later (Fig. 7) in 1564 that uses a similar figurative technique to represent another territorial dispute, this time between two communities, Wotton Underwood and Ludgershall, “arising from rights of common on the one hundred acres of “Wotton Lawnd”” (Ballon and Friedman 2007, plate 21). In this case the drawing shows “villages, fields, woods, and pastures of this area and bears the names of all but one of the places mentioned in associated written depositions” (Ibidem, pp. 706–707).

Both images lead us back to a discourse on places of origin. Besides the figurative technique, which “maintains some resemblances with the real datum the



**Fig. 7** Wotton Underwood, Buckingham Shire, 1546: ST Map 69, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, permission granted

drawing refers to so that details appear as if they were perceived in reality” (Farinelli 1992, p. 19), the two maps employ a scale (or depict a scene) that goes beyond the area in question to include a broader territorial space.

A similar style of drawing recurs in our corpus and produces, at least initially, an effect of distancing from the traditional cartographical image that this study seeks to problematize. However, it is precisely those maps that distance themselves from the city, village or the local scene providing a relational space with a different scale that are the most significant. Let us take Fig. 8 as example. As indicated on the reverse of the illustration, this is the map of the city of Imola. It is noteworthy that, unlike what happens in several other drawings, Imola is represented at the centre of a relational space structured around the Via Emilia. Besides cutting the city in two longitudinally, this road connects Imola with the city of Faenza eastward and with Bologna westward; hence the city appears to be represented from the north, reversing the orientation of canonical representations (Fig. 9). Thanks to this figurative technique, this representation of place of origin appears to be a mediation between the space of linear and geometrical distances and lived space that, contrary to the former, represents only places that are significant for the city and for one’s experience: the house, the race track, the shopping centre, the gym.

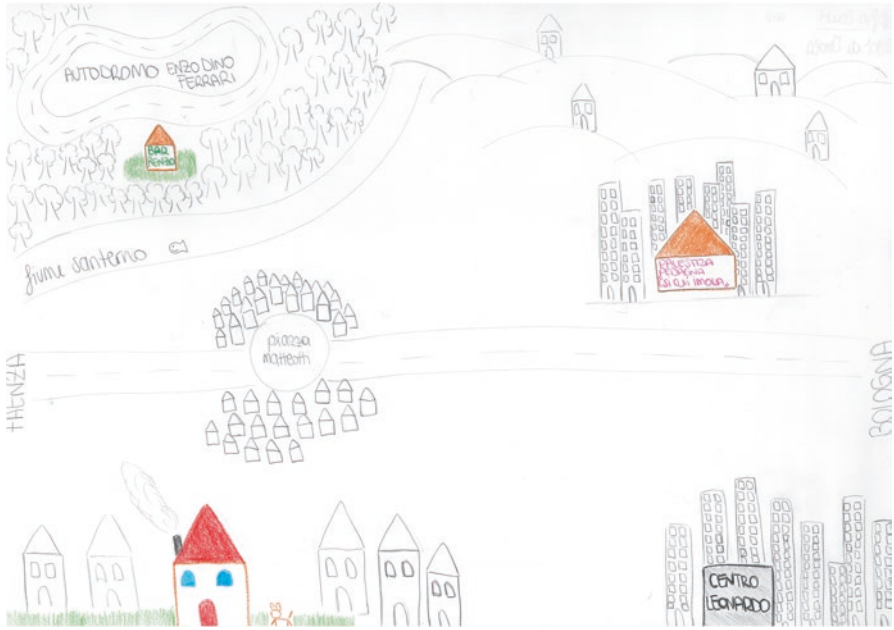


Fig. 8 Relational drawing of Imola

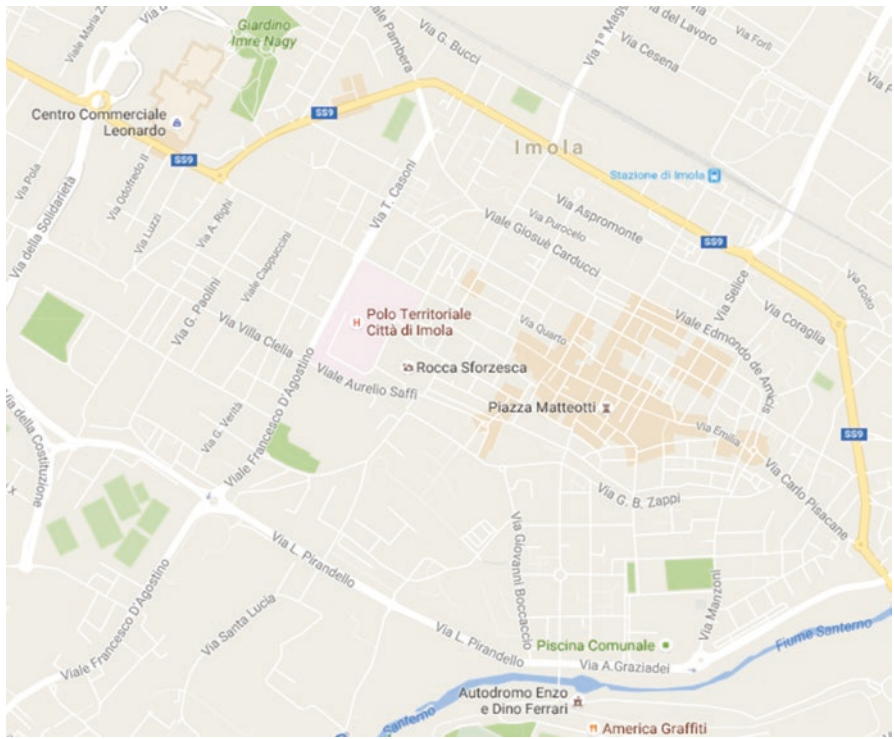
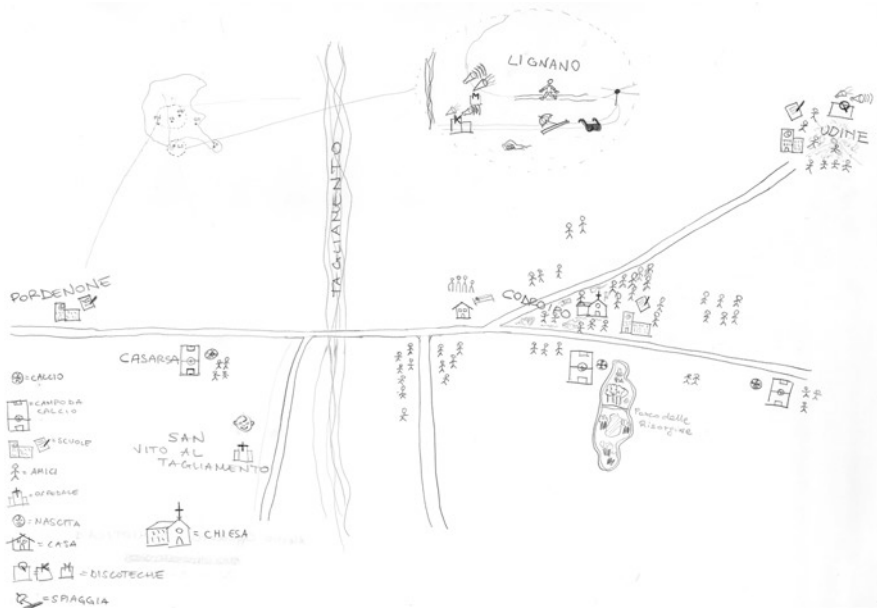


Fig. 9 Imola oriented northward (Google Maps)



**Fig. 10** The relational drawing of San Vito al Tagliamento

Another significant example is the drawing that represents the area around the villages of Codroipo and San Vito al Tagliamento in Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Fig. 10). In this example, the road provides a sharp division of the space of the entire local area. On the margin of the map are shown the city of Udine and Pordenone and the tourist resort of Lignano that is synecdochically represented through figurative elements. The place of origin in this case seems to spread in various clusters of objects that include place of residence, birthplace, school attended and a series of recreational activities.

In this case, the legend – which represents an important cartographical element – has been inserted inside the image. This translates the meaning of all the signs that have been placed in the representation, meanings that could however be inferred by the resemblance of the elements drawn that are not yet abstract symbols. Another significant characteristic is represented by the localization of the whole area of the place of origin in relation to the regional space. All the elements in the upper part of the map are represented in line with to their specific collocation in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region.

The employment of drawing in the corpus represents firstly a widely codified process in the history of cartography; secondly, it points to a practice that is very common among cartographers of thematic maps. Before the introduction of software that transformed data into images, the originary idea of the map was represented

through a drawing.<sup>18</sup> It is telling in this respect that ever since the pre-historical period, drawings of the earth have been connected to issues of the relationship between communities, territory and its representation. Despite the fact that drawings and iconic signs appear to be increasingly remote from contemporary cartographical representations, these are still of central importance in mapmaking, as our corpus shows.

## 5 Islands and Places

Representations of places of origin as islands are an altogether different matter. This categorization refers back to the way in which, until the invention of the atlas in the second half of the sixteenth century, maps were collected into single books.<sup>19</sup> *Isolarii* or “island books” were a collection of maps and descriptions of the whole globe “broken up into islands, that is to say something that did not contain something, but, was by definition contained by something else, that is to say by the sea” (Farinelli 2003, p. 11). More particularly *Isolarii* were “collections of maps showing the landing places on the Mediterranean islands and the sea ports of the European maritime powers” (Ferretti 2014, p. 35).

The peculiarity of the *Isolarii* is neither limited to their representational technique, nor to the fact that they were included in the first collection of maps before the invention of the atlases. The territories represented in the *Isolarii* are places, closed spaces, displaying their own specific properties. The transformational factors, including the changes in geographical practice, that will lead to the reduction of the world to space have, at this point in time, not yet happened. According to Tom Conley, in the *Isolario* “the world is appreciated for its diversity and taken to be an aggregate of singularities” (Conley 2007, p. 401). Figure 11 shows the map of Lesbos of Bundelmonti, considered the model for all subsequent representations of

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<sup>18</sup>On this see “[Cartografare il presente](#)”, a research and documentation centre about transformations in the contemporary world that uses cartography and multimedia technologies. This centre was founded in 2006 and it is an initiative of the Comitato internazionale di Bologna per la Cartografia e l’Analisi del Mondo Contemporaneo ([Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche dell’Università di Bologna](#)) and the French monthly *Le Monde diplomatique*

<sup>19</sup>The *Isolario* is a cartographical genre that begins at the end of the Medieval period and continues throughout the eighteenth century. Due to its peculiar chronology, the studies that describe its genesis and dissemination are included in both the first and third volume of the *History of Cartography*. According to Harley “the *isolario* is essentially a collection of Island materials, each Island usually having his own map and associated text” (Harvey 1987, p. 482). In the first volume that focuses on European cartography during the Renaissance, Tolias expands on the definition of *isolario* as follows: “the conventional term *isolario* is used to denote manuscripts or printed atlases that – regardless of title, format, or structure, and of whether a work contained text – consist of maps, mostly of islands but also of coastal areas of mainland, arranged in the form of a thematic encyclopedia. Their authors, in the early period, called their works ‘books of islands’, ‘island chorographies’, or ‘island navigations’” (Tolias 2007, p. 264).







**Fig. 12** Lesbos as place of origin

human settlements of the Island” (Tolias 2007, p. 266). The representation of Lesbos has resurfaced in our corpus as place of origin (Fig. 12).

The geographical localization of the Island provides a comparable instance with the Buondelmonti isolario. Also the signs used in the map are a reminder of some of the anthropic and natural elements that in the 1420 collection were considered relevant to the description of place. The comparison with a photograph of the Island of Lesbos photographed from Google Earth (Fig. 13) is even more significant: the north-south orientation typical of modern and contemporary cartography frames the representation of the place of origin, displaying it in a form of representation that possesses a good degree of geographical precision. The author of this representation distances herself from any intimate knowledge of this place and instead provides a standardized and stereotyped image more similar to a kind of representation a tourist could provide. A more personal rendering of the place of origin is connected to the games that are showed on the left of the figure.

The narration of places as “islands” does not only concern the specific case of Lesbos, but is a recurrent characteristic of several of the maps in our corpus. The place of origin, precisely because it is a closed environment unaffected by external influences, has its own spatial rules and structures. Exemplary of this is the case study shown in Fig. 14 that associates two different localities in a single map; more precisely, Sala Bolognese (Bo) and Ariha in the the Idlib Governorate of



Fig. 13 Lesbos from Google Earth

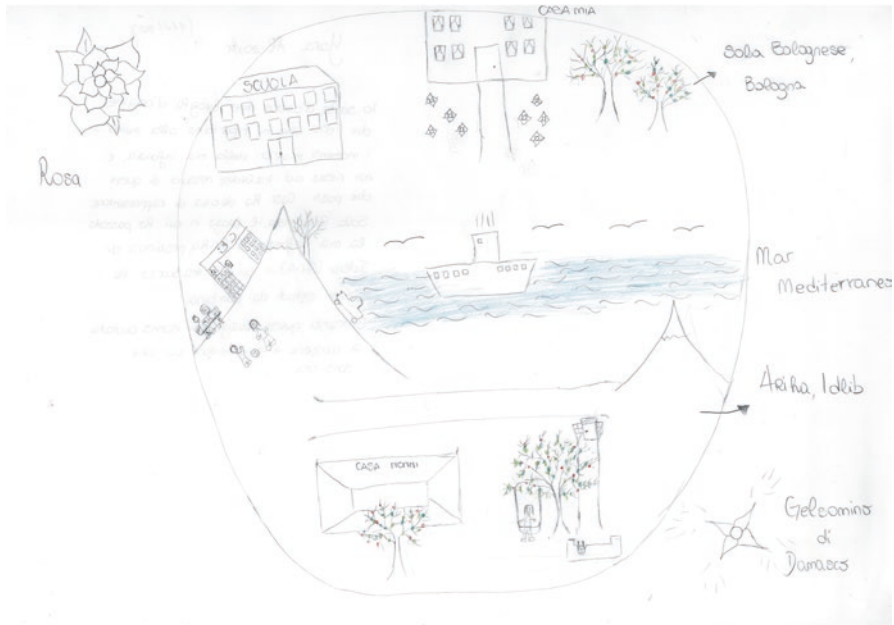
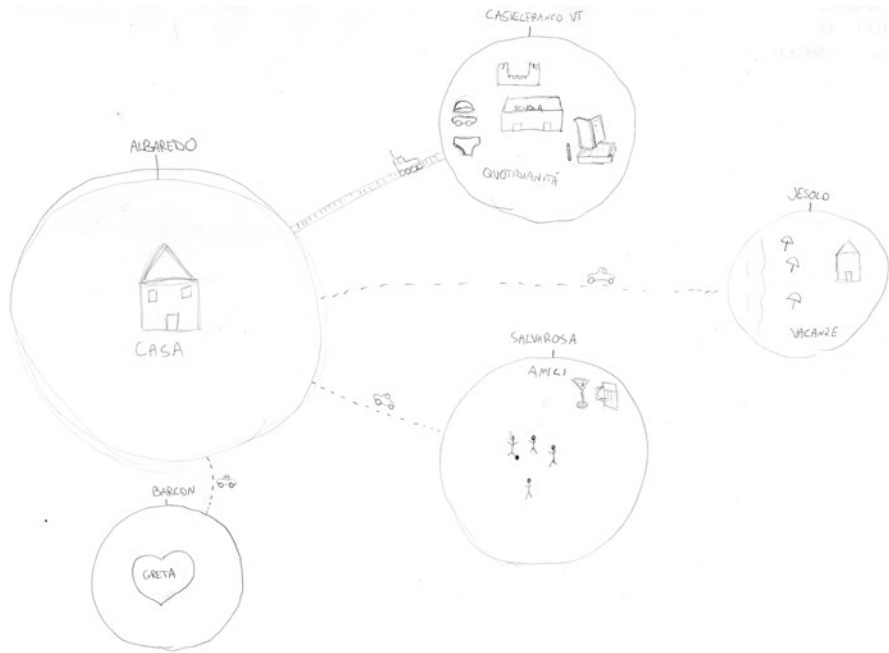


Fig. 14 The place of origin as island



**Fig. 15** The place of origin as multiple islands

Syria. The description explains the process of re-composition of these two places in a single image<sup>21</sup>.

I feel I have two places of origin, two lands that equally bring back memories of the happiest times of my childhood and I am unable to exclude either one of these places. So I have decided to represent Sala Bolognese, the place where I have spent my childhood, and Ariha, Idlib Governorate (Syria) where I have spent the best summers of my childhood. Both places contributed to my growing up and made me what I am now.

The spatial logic, the logic that regulates modern cartographic representation, obeys the principle of the “tertium non datur”, as noted by Farinelli (1992, p.11). Our maps seem to escape this rule and follow one that is not merely cartographic, but transforms places in small worlds, or to use Yi-Fu Tuan’s expression, “fields of care” (1974, 1977).

Place of origin as island, can also be observed in Fig. 15, though here the mode of representation is different. The map represents a multiplicity of places that, like islands, are enclosed and yet spatially connected the one with the other. As noted by Pietro Janni, “listing a series of localities in consecutive order complete with distances implies prior knowledge of what these mean to him/her, as he/she acts as reference point; tracing a map implies considering objective relations that connect

<sup>21</sup> For an exhaustive analysis of this case study as a discourse about co-belonging to two places of origin, see the essay by Pozzato in this book.

things” (Janni 1984, p. 82). The case discussed here refers to the first possibility; here no measurement but personal experience exists. The image shows the place where the house of the author is located in the small village of Albaredo, in the Treviso province, the place where daily life is centred around the school (Castelfranco Veneto), the place of friendship and pastimes (in the small village of Salvarosa), the place of the holiday in Jesolo and that of the sentimental relationship in the small village of Barcon. In this instance, the enclosed nature of the island is formally represented by circles, which bring to mind the islands of personality in the Disney-Pixar film *Inside Out* (2015) and that here can be defined as islands of experience.

Notwithstanding the elements of the representation and graphic modes that realise them, the issue of the place of origin as island is recurrent in most of our corpus. It provides a specific dimension of place, a part of earth that, by definition, “is not equivalent to any other” (Farinelli 2003, p. 11) and that cannot be adapted to the spatial logic of distance and measurement.

## 6 The Construction of Space

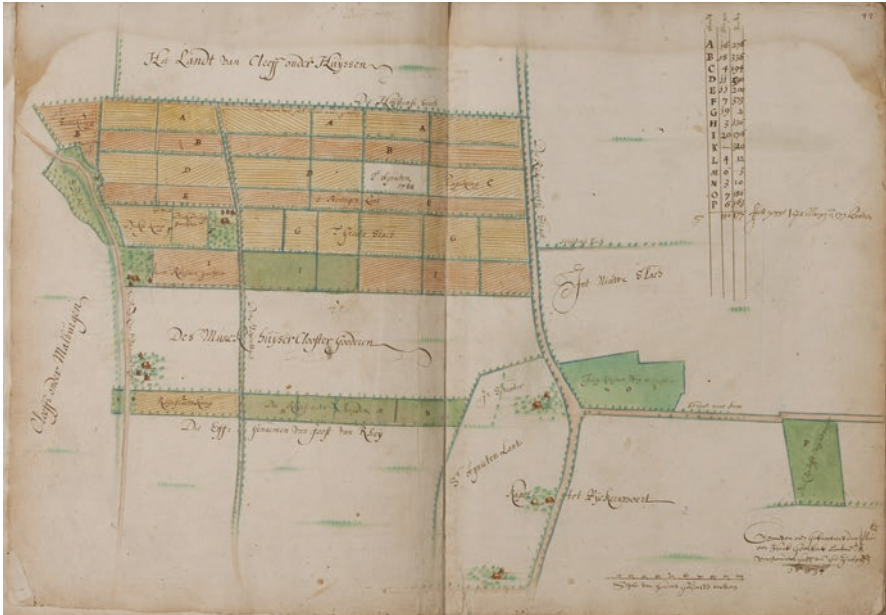
Having discussed a series of genres and cartographical features that differ from common ideas of geographical representation, this section considers all those image-texts that for their point of view, forms of representation and authorial skills, can provide a connection with this idea. The growing importance of the vertical point of view at the expense of the horizontal one brings forth a radical transformation of the idea of space. According to the history of cartography, the need to define political boundaries and all those geographical markers associated with land property rights, combined with the increasing importance of the army and real estate ownership in mapmaking, signals the end of the perspectival techniques. (Farinelli 1992, p. 29).<sup>22</sup> This shift produces a systematic transformation of the form and theories connected with geographical representations. In respect of forms, the geometric sign substitutes the drawn sign (ibidem) erasing any semblances with the object and producing a shift to abstract representation. During the seventeenth century these transformations produced a profoundly different space in maps, an objective one characterized by measurement that in a certain way jeopardized a more profound understanding of place. This shift is described in general terms by Jeff Malpas:

Since the concept of place is itself intertwined with the idea of space, so the restriction of focus that limits space to physical, objective space alone must also constitute a severe, indeed, debilitating, restriction on an attempt to arrive at an adequate understanding of place (Malpas 1999, p. 44).

This issue is crucial for our study as it causes place of origin to be represented from a completely different perspective increasingly mediated by the cartographical

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<sup>22</sup>According to John Pickles this shift is characterized by “the emergence of a new map consciousness” (2004, pp. 96–106).



**Fig. 16** Kaartboek van alle aan het St. Catharinae gasthuis toebehoorende landerijen: Gelders Archif Arnhem, 558–0015, permission granted

image, compromising, at least in part, the effects of “the geographic imagination”<sup>23</sup> (Gregory 1994).

Let’s take as example Fig. 16, which perfectly exemplifies the power of measurement in geographical representation. This is a map that dates back to 1635 “produced for land accounting and for the administration of property” (Koeman and Van Egmond 2007, 1255), providing a representation of the properties of Derrick Roelifs (P) and Jacob Reinen (O) in Elden e Rijkerswoerd (Arnhem).<sup>24</sup> In agricultural topography, the land surveyor’s need for measuring leads to the reduction (according various scales) of the world to space, and hence, a cartographical representation<sup>25</sup> functionally instrumental for the beginnings of the period of great geographical explorations. Henceforward, maps were destined to become powerful instruments that served the appropriation, dominion and control of the Earth (Wood and Fels 1993; King 1996; Harley 2001; Pickles 2004).

<sup>23</sup> See Bonazzi’s chapter “Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries”, in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> This map is part of a *kaartboek*, a map book made up of a set of pre-cadastral manuscript maps bound together. *Kaartboeken* became popular during the seventeenth century in the Netherlands and “were largely related to the administration of institutional landownership” (ibidem).

<sup>25</sup> It is precisely in this period that great geographic explorations begin and cartography becomes a powerful tool at the service of the Nations.



Fig. 17 Baricella (BO)

This kind of representational logic recurs in much of our corpus. Despite significant stylistic differences, in the following examples the progressive abstraction of space produces a drawing of the place of origin devoid of iconic features and horizontal perspective.

Figures 17 and 18 below should be analyzed as part of a sequence. In both of them the panoramic point of view and a progressive abstraction of the sign are evident, particularly so in the first one – that portrays Baricella, a small village north of Bologna – the most significant places are singled out through the use of a different colour around their edges. Even though in the representation, descriptions of the areas are minimal, on the reverse of the image a text provides precise explanations that connect each colour with a function: “various schools, the dentists’, friends’ houses and the distillery”.

In Fig. 18, that represents the city centre of Sermide (MN) near the Po river, the process of representation is similar and provides a vertical perspective, with the sole exception of the representation of various kind of equipments in parks. The remainder of the drawing shows a sketched structure of the buildings through a process of selection that limits and reduces the objects represented. Once again it is the description on the reverse that provides an explanation to understand the map and the meaning of the personal experience this represents. The author of the map writes: “I have tried to represent the places I was going to more frequently, what I have shown here







**Fig. 19** Abstraction and generalization of space

## 7 Conclusion: The Thirdspace of Places of Origin

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, due to the heterogeneity of our corpus, a systematic classification of images has been avoided.<sup>26</sup> Instead, some general criteria for the definition of spatial representation (Delano Smith 1987) has been used. Analysis of our visual-texts focused on the potential critical elements concerning geographical discourse on the representation of space (the images) and on the space of representation (the ideas). Point of view has been used as a key element in our reading of the internal space of maps; references to the history of cartography have shown that point of view has also been of key importance in relation to some fundamental changes in the process of mapmaking. The material used to produce the visual texts of our corpus – pencils including coloured ones – has spurred some reflections on figurative drawing associated with cartographical production for

<sup>26</sup>Initially, we thought of making a preliminary catalogue of maps by way of variables, characters and recurrences; considerations about the scale (large or medium) would have provided the starting point, we would have then proceeded with an ordering of material according to the organizing element, the level of abstraction of the signs used, geographical precision, personal references, degree of idiosyncrasies and the identification of places and buildings. Data obtained would then have been compared with some guiding principles for representation, such as localization and movement. In the end we have opted for a completely different method that is qualitative and hence provides a geographic discourse on ideas of space emerging from our maps.

centuries. Some attempt has been made to connect ways to represent space and ideas about space. For this reason, references to *isolarii* have been made; these are visual narrations of self-contained spaces, *islands of experience* that can be used in descriptions of places of origin and the values these represents have for those who draw them. Lastly, it has been shown that in our corpus abstraction of representation is, as in the history of cartography, a graphic expedient that does not eliminate the fundamental experiential nature of space.

From what has emerged so far in this study, maps of places of origin reproduce and provide the form of Soja's description of the Thirdspace, a rearticulation of the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), as Soja himself explains:

Lefebvre opens the way to a *trialectics of spatiality*, always insisting that each mode of thinking about space, each "field" of human spatiality – the physical, the mental, the social – be seen as simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical. (Soja 1996, pp. 64–65)

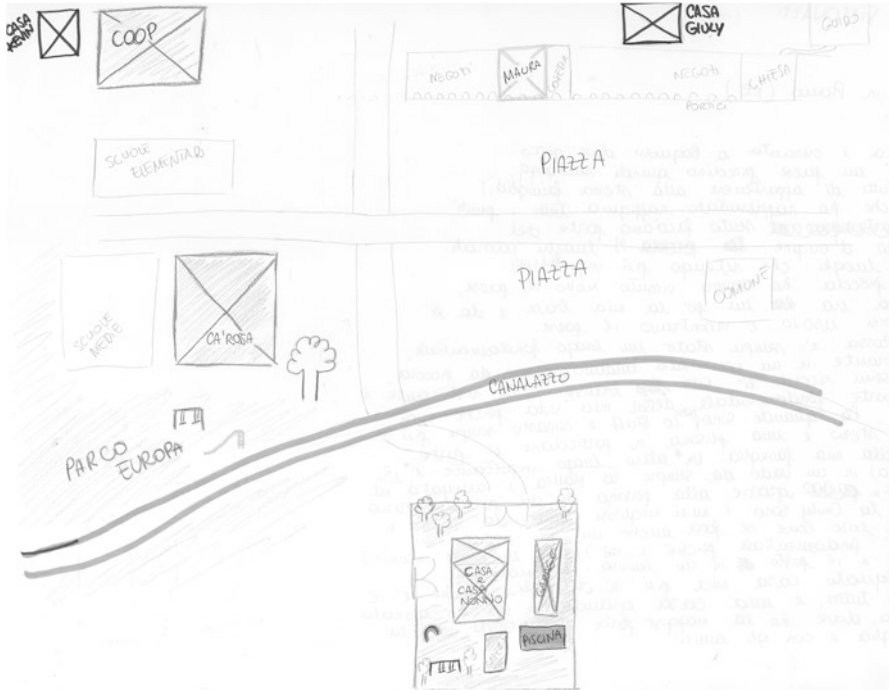
Lefebvre's work paves the way for Soja's own trialectics of spatiality: *real space* (perceived space), *representational space* (imagined space) and the *spaces of representation* (lived space). These have then been re-named as Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace respectively.<sup>27</sup> Soja's attention has focused on those places that represent the Thirdspace: spaces that "embody complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not" (Soja 1996, 67); in short, spaces that are lived, "a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Ibidem).

Another key feature of Thirdspace that connects it with places of origin is its co-presence of "real and imagined, things and thought on equal terms" (Ibidem). As we have seen, despite different forms of representation (what Soja has defined as representation in space) lived experience is the main characteristic that recurs throughout our whole corpus. This is clear in the explanations, and/or commentaries (both written and oral during interviews), that accompany the visual texts analyzed and the graphic choices that structure and orient the memory of place. It has been noted, precisely in relation to memory, that "the ordering of our experience and our histories, is not just temporal, but also spatial (Morrissey 2012, p. 193), in other words a close connection between memory of the past and place has been posited. As Malpas has pointed out "the past cannot be pried away from the place [...] this connection with place is particularly evident when we attempt to remember childhood memories" (Malpas 1999, pp. 180–182).

Several images of our corpus are a condensation of the imperative for representation (as a consequence of the initial desire of this study to produce "a sort of map" of places of origin), of elements of one's imaginary and of an intimate geography mediated by memory. Let us consider once again Fig. 4, in which verbal specifications contained in the image provide an exemplary case of lived space. From left to right: the lights of the city of Bologna ("at night from the window of my parents'

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<sup>27</sup> For a detailed description of trialectic of space, see Soja (1996, pp. 60–70) and Bonazzi (2011, pp. 113–121).



**Fig. 20** The lived space of Bagnolo di Piano

window one could see the lights of Bologna”); the trees are “pine trees and underneath we used to build the hut”; the hedge “behind which there was a narrow and cosy passageway”; Mazzini’s house “with a very big garden where from time to time we went to retrieve our ball”. All these captions produce a space that is less abstract and freed from rules of representation, a lived space that relies on an intimate geography of memory and constructs an experiential space estranged from projective geometry.

The Thirdspace of places of origin can be noted also in the relation between image and lived experience in Fig. 20, a map of Bagnolo in Piano (RE) whose representation and written commentary summarize what we have said so far.

If, on the one hand, the forms of the representation produce a rather impersonal place from a vertical point of view that is intermediate between an abstract and a figurative drawing, on the other hand the text constructs a space that goes beyond this image and completes it, widening its understanding in line with one of Soja’s features of Thirdspace as a “space of inhabitants and users”.

I grew up in Bagnolo where I still live. It is a small village and because of this we feel we belong to one big family. The area I have represented shows all the landmarks that I feel belong to my place of origin ... ever since I was small I have always *lived* my village. My house was somewhat my base and from there every day I went out *to meet my village*. Ca’ Rossa has always been a very important place, it is the restaurant where I used to go with

my parents when I was a child. I have many memories of this place, all of them beautiful. The restaurant is still part of my life because I am working there. Since I was born the staff has not changed that much and a person in particular is now part of my family. Another important place is Maura's café; I have always gone there .... Kevin e Giuly have always been my best friends and I feel their house is also a bit mine. The coop is also important because it is another place where people in the village meet and it is the place where my mum works ...

The construction of the Thirdspace of places of origin should be understood as a way to problematize the textual analysis of maps by including them in a wider discourse that employs a plurality of languages through a method that has been illustrated by Maria Pia Pozzato in her Introduction and in so doing establishes a geographical equivalent to Denis Wood and John Fells' re-formulation of Gerard Genette's idea of paratext.<sup>28</sup>

Maps of places of origin provide the possibility of re-formulating a geographical discourse on the specificity of places that distances itself from the *topos*<sup>29</sup> (Casti 2013; Mangani 2007) and can provide access to the perceptive and experiential dimension of landscape, endowing these cartographic texts with a wider geographical perspective on the relationship between people and space.

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<sup>28</sup>These authors use the term *paramap* (see Wood and Fels 2008, pp. 8–12).

<sup>29</sup>The philosophic idea of *topos* is borrowed from Augustine Berque (2000, pp. 19–30), this “endows value to sensible aspects of geographic phenomena through their dimension and position, but erases the social [...] *topos* is a self-legitimizing abstract spatial idea that excludes the subject” (Casti 2013, p. 45).

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# Navigating Maps of Memories

Federico Montanari

**Abstract** The main purpose of this essay is to present and discuss a hypothesis concerning the semiotic and cultural transformation of the ideas of ‘map’ and ‘mapping’. Today, in our society, maps work more like navigation logs than traditional charts. What does this mean and what does this new dimension of mapping mean? We will try to investigate these issues not only as a theoretical hypothesis, but also through the observation of a corpus of maps drawn by a group of young students coming from a homogeneous geographical area (North Eastern Italy). We will develop this analysis using semiotic and socio-ethno-semiotic tools, taking into account the possible influence that social media and technologies, such as mobile phones, other digital media and devices (like Google maps, etc.) might have had on the authors of maps and their mapping activities. Drawing on visual cultural anthropology, and ethnography, and particularly Oliver Sack’s work on memory, the first part of this study will be devoted to a definition of the ‘map’, and of ‘mapping activity’, with particular reference to their transformation from traditional mapping to digital and locative media. In this first part reference will be made to the main literature on this subject, from Cognition studies and their connections with recent Visual Studies, to sociological methodology and STS (Science and Technology Studies, in particular Bruno Latour’s works; see also Akrich (1992) and Akrich and Latour (1992)). Finally, in last part of this essay, some analysis of maps of places of origins drawn by students will be provided.

Magnani was billed as “A Memory Artist,” and one had only to glance at the exhibit to see that he indeed possessed a prodigious memory – a memory that could seemingly reproduce with almost photographic accuracy every building, every street, every stone of Pontito, far away, close up, from any possible angle. It was as if Magnani held in his head an infinitely detailed three-dimensional model of his village, which he could turn around and examine, or explore mentally and then reproduce on canvas with total fidelity. [...]

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This, then, was an exhibit not of a “pure” memory but of memory harnessed to a single, overwhelming motive: the recollection of his childhood village. And, I now realized, it was not just an exercise in memory: it was, equally, an exercise in nostalgia – and not just an exercise but a compulsion, and an art (O. Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*, pp. 200–201).

## 1 From Maps to Memory Visions

The aim of this work is twofold. Firstly, we re-consider some concepts and hypotheses concerning the contemporary transformation of the idea of map and mapping. Mapping is integral to our society in that its socio-technological dynamics are centered, as we shall see, on the practice and use of different forms of mapping. Secondly, we aim to study a specific experience of the drawing of a map of the place origin, beginning from the research group’s initial request of “drawing of a sort of map of one’s birthplace, or the place in which one lived early on in life, which shows one’s home and around it spaces that were significant” (see the introduction by Maria Pia Pozzato; see also Barthes (1967); Cervelli and Sedda (2006); Choay (1969); Eugeni (2010, 2016); Greimas (1976); Hammad (2003)). The interviewees had to express their memories of their place of origin by drawing maps; the scholars involved have provided an analysis that shows the meaning of these visual expressions of memories. My experience involved a large group of students (more than 150) that during November 2015 attended the first and second year course of Product Design at ISIA at Pordenone in the north east of Italy. The maps produced by these students were later included in the research group corpus.

Here I wish to focus on the relationship between memory of places of origin and mapping experiences connected with the use of new technologies, such as for example Google Maps and several other visual applications that can be downloaded on electronic devices (smartphones, iPad and similar others; see Bratton (2008)). Close observation of the maps drawn by my students reveal not so much the direct employment of these new technologies, but rather the cultural traces that this produces. We can hypothesize a relation between a general idea of “memory” and “reminiscence” of place of origin and the socio-cultural transformations caused by the use of new technologies in our daily lives.

I want to start by considering some ideas of memory and its visual perceptions and representations in an impressive study by Oliver Sacks “The Landscape of his Dreams” included in the above-mentioned volume *An Anthropologist on Mars* (Sacks 1995). This is dedicated to the case of Franco Magnani who has spent his whole life painting accurate – and yet not completely realistic – pictures of Pontito, his own place of origin and a small village in Tuscany, near Pescia. After the devastations during World War II and the death of his father, Franco Magnani has travelled around everywhere in the world searching for jobs. Eventually he arrived in San Francisco. Magnani is not one of the several pathological cases described in Sack’s well-known studies; indeed he was never one of Sacks’ patient. Sacks came to know about Magnani’s life after he visited one of his exhibitions during a conference on memory, after that the two became friends.



The famous neurologist has hypothesized a relation between Magnani's way of painting and the "*interictal personality syndrome*" first identified in the nineteenth century and which once again drew the attention of scholars in the 1950s. This is a pathology that leads to involuntary and very intense visions and "reminiscences" connected to forms of epilepsy or migraine. Some of the scholars quoted by Sacks have hypothesized that famous artists and writers such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Vincent Van Gogh, Edgar Allan Poe, Marcel Proust, Philip Dick were also affected by this syndrome. This a fascinating hypothesis but also excessively generalized, so much so that Sacks himself has declared that it is impossible to use. Yet, Sacks notes a detail that is important for this study: despite the fact that Magnani had never seen his small village again after he left, he was able to reproduce it in a way that can be defined hyper-realistic, even though some formal and stylistic features concerning both expression and content diverge from the definition of hyper realistic painting. We are referring here to the lack of inhabitants, a sort of "suspended time", the intensity of vision, some oneiric features in the painting, as well as the recurrence of partial views, the details of his bedroom, the representation of narrow streets and panoramic views of the nearby countryside (always devoid of human beings). Perspectival choices are either too wide or composite in comparison with those that can be obtained with a camera. In his late paintings these partial views seem to be projected onto an extra-terrestrial space waiting for an apocalypse to happen. Several years after he left his village, Magnani returned to visit the village following an invitation by the major. On a second later visit Sacks accompanied him.

These visits and his grief at the death of first his beloved mother and later of his wife caused a temporary interruption of Magnani's ability to paint his memories.

There is no space in this article to consider the details of this artist's life and work<sup>1</sup>; here we will concentrate only on what in Magnani's case is relevant for our study of representation of places of origin. Sacks has commented not just on the re-constructing dimension of the workings of memory, but also on its *constructive* and *productive* characteristics, that are particularly evident in the processes of "re-evocation", or "evocation" of one's place of origin. According to Sacks, this connects the individual psyche with a cultural and anthropological dimension. This is not a process intended to merely "register and set aside", a sort of "movie of the memory" or a "database" of the mind. Sacks relates Magnani's extreme case with other scientific data that emerged during the 1990s<sup>2</sup> and also with Proust's well-known definitions of poetic memory. This, has been defined by Sacks as 'a collection of moments,' the memories of which are not 'informed of everything that has happened since' and remain 'hermetically sealed,' like jars of preserve in the minds's larder" (Sacks, *op. cit.*, pp. 228–229). These reflections connect with Gilles Deleuze's

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<sup>1</sup>For example of primary importance is the figure of the mother (a sort of clairvoyant), or the shock felt by Magnani in discovering the state of decay of his village, almost abandoned with its the fallow fields. Sacks also provides interesting and more general neuro-psychological considerations concerning processes and pathologies of memory that we will not mention here.

<sup>2</sup>We are referring here to Edelman studies, or the new definitions of distributed cognitive systems, later works by Hutchins and Bruner – also quoted by Sacks – on the relationship between cognition and narrativity.

work on Proust (1964), where he focuses attention on details similar to those noted by Sacks: nothing in Proust is “remembering”, not even the *madeleines* or the wet *pavés*. All of this is reactivation and at the same time “telescope”, pre-cognition and observation of future time and space. Objects and sources of memories, memory of places, of the sensations felt in a more or less remote past become occasions for the activation and construction of future pathways. According to Deleuze (ib.), in Proust the artistic-aesthetic memory produces signs for the future.

Nowadays, after decades of studies in the fields of neuro-psychological and cognitive science, anthropology and semio-linguistics about the plastic and “autopoietic” abilities of cognition and perception, it appears superfluous to talk about the “productive and constructive” or representational abilities of memory. And yet, in Deleuze’s analysis of Proust there is a further interesting aspect that connects with our discussion of “memory of the origin” and memory in general. I am referring to his idea of “pro-active” memory. One could object that with Proust and in the case of Magnani we are faced with art – in the specific case of Magnani, a pathological aspect of art – and therefore that these cases are very different from what we are analysing here. Sacks would probably answer this objection by saying that the case of Magnani is on the one hand an extreme case but on the other it also shows a visionary ability that is common in all representations of places of origin; this in fact implies more than a mere mnemonic effort, but requires that places are reconstructed, literally *hallucinated* through the activation of an “intense” re-evocation. It is important to remember here the strong connection between this kind of representation and the emotive dimension including nostalgia, memories of loved ones that lived in those places<sup>3</sup> and all those anecdotes that revolve around these memories.<sup>4</sup>

Concerning the specific case of Magnani, Sacks writes:

What seemed to have occurred, by a singular fortuity, was the co-occurrence, the concurrence, of an acute need and a physiological state. For if his sense of exile and loss and nostalgia demanded a sort of world, a substitute for the real world he had lost, his experiential seizures now supplied what he needed, an endless supply of images from the past – or rather, an almost infinitely detailed, three-dimensional ‘model’ of Pontito, an entire theater or simulacrum he could mentally walk about and explore, capturing new aspects, new views, wherever he looked; this, clearly, depended equally on his prodigious, preexistent powers of memory and imagery (Sacks, op. cit., p. 214).

The heightened intensity and emotive charge of the images that “translate” memories of place of origin do not solely depend on memory, but, as theorized by Sacks, are activated by memory; it is a process through which “*Franco’s personal, nostalgic feelings become cultural, transcendent ones*” (Sacks, op. cit. p. 233). The memories of “that” place (the village of Pontito) become special “in embodying a precious culture – a mode of building, a mode of living, that has almost vanished from the earth”

<sup>3</sup>On the affective dimension and the importance of interpersonal relations during childhood and the meaning of place of origin, see Mazzeo’s, chapter “[Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis](#)”, in this volume.

<sup>4</sup>On the importance of the narrative in the construction of sense, see Greimas 1986 and Pezzini 1998. Concerning space: Lotman (1987); Marrone (2009); Marrone and Pezzini (2006, 2008); Marsciani (2007); Montanari (2008); Pozzato (2006). Concerning emotional mapping, see Nold (2006).

(p. 233). Imaginative memory in general, continues Sacks, not only preserves fleeting moments of perception, but it transfigures and distances them giving them with a new life and transforming them into harmless entities. At the same time, “it also transfigures distances, vivifies, defangs – reshapes formed impressions, turns oppressive immediacies into wide vistas [...]” (p. 232). As we have noted, in Deleuze’s study of Proust, memory – and in particular memory of places of origin – becomes the ability to reconstruct the past to face present needs, fears and interests. On this issue Sacks quotes the psychoanalyst Frederic Bartlett that in turn confirms the views of more recent scholars quoted also here, such as Hutchins (1995), “Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organised past reactions or experience.” (p. 230).

## 2 Navigable Maps Today

How is it possible to connect this “active”, constructivist and affective idea of landscapes of memory, of the act of representing and remembering the place of origin through maps with the present cultural situation as delineated at the beginning of this chapter? Our daily life is marked by the maps of all kinds, by a myriad of trajectories and pathways made available through social media, the web and satellites directly on our electronic devices. In light of this, can this reflection on the “creativity” of memory’s journeys to places still be pertinent today? Before considering some examples from our corpus, it is necessary to briefly describe the possible transformations brought about by today’s technological and cultural context.

Projects of different kinds of “mapping” (scientific, practical, commercial etc. etc.) concern not only urban places, but “spaces” and places in general. The pace of the production, transformation and construction of charts and maps has become overwhelming (also from an economic point of view), and crosses the boundaries of traditional disciplines. Recently, “cartographic practice” has become a diffuse social practice with commercial characteristics, but also “bottom up” (Lammes and Wilmott 2013; Montanari 2010, 2014). Let us consider cases that are now well-established such as Google, Google Maps or Google Earth, or electronic devices and interfaces such as smartphones and Gis and Gps (initially limited to professional users i.e. geographers, geologists, archaeologists, military engineers but now made available to car drives, trekking enthusiasts, skippers or even tourists). Quoting the geographer Franco Farinelli (2009) we can say that from the “crisis of cartographic reason” we have shifted to its possible sublimation and reconversion within economic, cultural and social practices.

All this is not of secondary importance in a study focused on personal mapping (though this is limited to places of origin). Particularly, as the aim of this study is to start an interdisciplinary discussion that encompasses human and social sciences (Kern [1983 (2003)]; Lefebvre 1974; Lynch 1960, 1976); in this case forms of representation and visualization through maps or territories and spaces past and present are crucial.

Bruno Latour (1992) has provided an important contribution to a more precise understanding of the “mediations” on forms of “delegation” between human social actors and “non human” in the technological field. Latour has pointed out that social sciences – and prior to these our cultural universe and societies – have been changed by the extraordinary and ever-pervasive phenomenon caused by “visualization devices”.

Recently, due first to the Internet and the computer and later technologies and devices for “imaging”, social attitudes, our daily life, human sciences and scientific research have undergone revolutionary innovations. The most recent cases are represented by VR (*Virtual Reality*) or AR (*Augmented Reality*) systems (see Montani 2014), though for a long time all kinds of information, and data – from historical to economical ones and those concerning social trends – have been given a visual form. This causes various kinds of transformations on different levels: ideological, practical, discursive and in terms of values systems, particularly for younger generations. This essay does not intend to be the beginning of a discussion about the use and impact of the Ipad and various other electronic devices, rather it is an attempt to evaluate this phenomenon in a wider sense. The question is: What happens to vision when everything becomes subjected to a visual device (to use Michel Foucault’s expression) and all we can possibly talk about is visualized? The answer to these questions takes us straight into the socio-anthropological point of our survey.

Given all this, what form do maps take today? According to the geographers involved in this project (see the chapters by Bonazzi and Frixa, chapters. “[The Representation of the Places of Origin: A Geographical Perspective](#)” and “[Geographical Imagination And Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries](#)”, this volume), the transformations in our corpus retain connections with memory; as Alessandra Bonazzi rightly suggests, mapping is the act of registering what “explorers have left behind”. In this direction socio and ethno-semiotic disciplines propose a sort of parallel approach they do not to pretend to “see more” rather they analyse situations and relative mappings from another point of view: the point of view of cartography intended as a specific form of textuality that is the result of hybrid practices (de Certeau 1984). From a semiotic point of view, there are textual stratifications, such as discursive, semantic and value networks, that structure, but also de-structure the form of maps and charts. More specifically, what is important to study from an ethno- and socio-semiotic point of view is the visualization mechanism of the viewer (Acquarelli 2013; Crary 1992): it is to understand what relationship is constructed between the subject that drew the map and the map itself. Which and how many points of view are being instantiated? And what perspectives and organizations both spatial and temporal (such as memory and narration) are represented?

But the general question remains: what has then happened today, concerning the recent fashion and large use and diffusion of every kind of mapping technologies? Several scholars have said that we are in the midst of a “geo-locative turn” of the media and communication devices (Thielmann 2010; Farman 2012; Frith 2015; de Souza e Silva and Sheller 2015; de Souza e Silva and Frith 2012). We could think of the above-mentioned examples as part of a pragmatics of digital media. This geo-locative dimension seems to be at the heart of a wider transformation that also includes possible rules for a new media pragmatics. A characteristic of locative media is obviously geo-localization (Wilken and Goggin 2014): this word however

should not be intended simply to mean to find one's position in a territory, but also, and above all, to have the possibility of "navigating" it, to perform operations and actions in this territory and in relation it.

As mentioned above, recent years have been characterized by a huge production of maps<sup>5</sup> – albeit this is hardly a historical novelty. Therefore, another issue that arises concerns accumulation: we are surrounded by maps and the stratification of maps. We continuously need charts and maps to find more charts and maps from the past. Accumulation and connection seem to be two discursive practices that act within the present semiotic system. It could be objected that maps and map-making have always existed. But the change seems precisely to concern the transformation of the statute of maps. This concerns first of all new forms of intersubjectivity (Farman 2012) and at the same time the possibility of using maps as geo-referential and geo-localized devices. The mobile device is itself, according to Farman, part of a wider interface made up of an interactive map and the body that enters a territory; a "concrete metaphor" of navigability that has led to concrete practices of access to maps and their territorial experiences. Maps themselves have become performative, because through these and the employment of *digital navigation*<sup>6</sup> we do and obtain things. Their components resemble those used for video games: navigational bars, acquisition and management of data, possibility of resetting, results output, place holders, correspondences and data recollection. Scholars have pointed out repeatedly that maps are metaphors for navigational routes; maps in this sense become again, as Bruno Latour has indicated, a sort of "ancient strip" or a sort of "parchment roll", on a two-dimensional surface. The digital therefore has forced us to leave the mimetic to embrace the navigational and locational made possible primarily through mobile devices. Moreover, Latour et al. (2010) quotes the cognitive psychologist Hutchins (1995) because he has widened the concept of mind and cognition to encompass the instrumental, cultural and environmental domain. This is the well-known idea of *distributed* and *embodied cognition*: the object is transformed because the body, in positioning itself in the space and in place, re-composes the interaction with that object, the space and the technology that allows these interactions.

The opposition between mimetic and navigable hybridizes in the concrete experiences of map-making, as we shall see when we will consider the forms of "memory maps". According to scholars influenced by Latour and his group working on *Science and Technology Studies* (see for example Lammes and Wilmott 2013), these forms of map-making are hybrid in-between "located", "pseudo video-games" and game surfaces where, besides the hybrid form, what is of central importance is also fluidity. In these kinds of experiences, it has become more and more common to lose sight of the difference between ludic and "serious" planes of the experience.<sup>7</sup> More generally, when studying today's navigable maps it has therefore become of main

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<sup>5</sup>This has been the subject of several conferences: *Médiations Sémiotiques* at Albi (July 2015); or *Geomedia* in 2015, in which several conference speakers declared that "the market of maps" is one of the most thriving in the whole world.

<sup>6</sup>Along with Latour this issue has been studied together with Latour, November, Camacho-Hubner (2010).

<sup>7</sup>We are referring here to the well-known case of social media such as *Foursquare* or others.

importance to take into consideration these experiences that look like a sort of “serious gaming” activity, and all the more so when these maps have been drawn by young “quasi millennials” and digital natives.

### 3 The Case of a Map and Drawing of the Memory of Origin

The analysis of this corpus and this one particular case provide some references to the above-mentioned hypotheses. Firstly, it is important to note that the students in Pordenone study design and for this reason have more technical and artistic skills than other students involved in the same research project. These students see themselves as “competent” in graphic design and, in part, it is so. Their skills can emerge in a more or less explicit way in their drawings and their general expressive ability. Some of their maps have been analyzed by others scholars that took part in the project. In the same way as my colleagues, I have asked students to include brief comments on the margin of their drawings. All this took place during university lectures, laboratories and a course of visual ethnography. This approach was of a global type and half way between macro and micro, to quote what already noted by Maria Pia Pozzato, in the chapter “[Introduction](#)”, to this volume. In other words, we have considered some common segments and stylistic traits and asked ourselves whether these could have been generalized; at the same time, we have also taken into consideration specific characteristics<sup>8</sup> to see whether these can be a unique and individual discourse in the sense given to stylistic traits by semiotics (see in note 8).

Let’s then offer a first description for a semiotic analysis of this set of maps, drawings and representations of places. On the one hand, we find here what we have called a kind of “navigable maps” (see for example, Figs. 7.1 and 7.3). The mappers have here tried to bring back some typical elements of electronic maps and websites, or representations of navigable and geolocated maps. But at the same time they recall, significantly, the style of some ancient maps, in a sort of “pop-up” style, where a specific object is emphasized and made to come out. There is therefore the presence of some “symbolic” elements of places (such as monuments, etc.) as well as “tag signs”, typical of electronic maps such as Google maps. Secondly, there is another prevalent element. The link between the already mentioned “empty place” feature (see below), a particular point of view that characterizes the viewer’s position (such as a window) and the “memorial and affective” dimension of those places. And this allows us to formulate some hypothesis about the content organization, in particular concerning the link between the definition of the “place of origin”, the spatial dimension and the temporal dimension.

In this direction the structural elements that have caught our attention are basically two. The first is what, referring to Sacks, we can call the “Magnani effect”. Several of

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<sup>8</sup>For stylistic traits we mean the complex configuration that keep together plastic and figurative elements of the place of expression that can later be associated to elements on the plane of content, that is to say of “forms of experience”. (Fontanille 2015).

these maps show deserted “empty spaces”; and yet these do not appear to be desolate, often they appear serene, as sometimes happens in dreams. The characteristic of emptiness has already been noted by other scholars involved in this research.<sup>9</sup> What is interesting though is to note the specificities of this emptiness, particularly in light of Sacks’ reflections. The main differences with all the other maps is that students have drawn partial views, places whose perspective recalls the one relayed in *Street View*: a street, seen from inside a bedroom, a corner of the village; these are spaces without life (see Figs. 1, 2, and 3), and yet drawn in their finest details.

While Sacks’ case would seem to highlight a tendency towards the emotive and passionate, our maps produce an effect of suspension in time; time is frozen in a “then” whose vision can be re-evoked. It is also possible to theorize that this “emptiness” or “thatness” effect is something that is connected to the “mapping instinct” mentioned by Harmon (2003), which can be likened to the “language instinct”.<sup>10</sup> This “instinct” nurtures several human practices and cultures (for example the famous graffiti in Valcamonica mentioned by Harmon). It could be connected to places of origin.

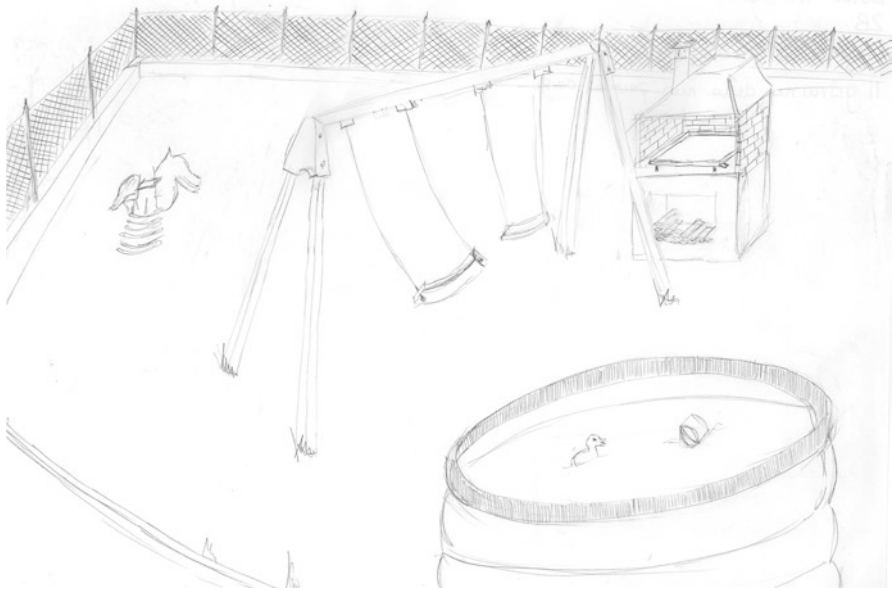
According to Harmon (ib., p. 10), [...] “humans have a urge to map – [...] In this part of Lombardy, glaciers retreated and left smooth swaths of rock, on which, over a



**Fig. 1** *Empty spaces: the street*

<sup>9</sup>See for example the idea of “thatness” in Alessandra Bonazzi’s chapter, or the cases of negated places in Maria Pia Pozzato’s chapter or again indicative voids of loneliness in the cases studied by Giulia Mazzeo.

<sup>10</sup>Important are the pre-verbal forms of children who very early on learn to map and trace routes.



**Fig. 2** *Empty spaces again: the courtyard, games*



**Fig. 3** *As in Sacks, the gaze from the window*

period of eight thousand years, prehistoric people carved one of the world's greatest collections of petroglyphs. This image dates to the Iron-Age and is thought to be among the oldest-known maps extant, perhaps showing a farming settlement at the bottom of the valley it faces. Four thousand or so years ago someone sat on the rock



and made this map, and it captivates me. [...] Maps intrigue us, perhaps none more than those that ignore mapping conventions. These are maps that find their essence in some other goal than just taking us from point A to point B. They are a vehicle for the imagination, fuelled up and ready to go. We look at these maps, and our mind knows how to do: take the information and extrapolate from it a place where they can leap, play, gambol-without that distant province of our being, the body, dragging them down.

Of course, part of what fascinates us when looking at a map is inhabiting the mind of its maker, considering that particular terrain of imagination overlaid with those unique contour lines of experience”.

Although this “mapping instinct” is much more cultural than natural, as it has been well underlined in another important book (see, *A history of the world in Twelve Maps*, Brotton 2012), such a key environment for our affective being is not merely remembered but literally re-mapped or re-mediated in order to construct and re-constitute our “having being here, then”; or in trying to imagine what it is like to be “there”, in that place and at that time, not for us but for another map creator.

Coming back to our map corpus, the second stylistic characteristic that has caught my attention in these drawings is the window, or what we can call the “screen effect”. Here window should be understood in the meaning this word has acquired from information technology, as in multi-screen vision with “*windows*” (see Figs. 4 and 5). But, more generally, windows stand for the viewer’s ability to cut something from a space and time, but also to emphasize the boundary, the spatial-temporal boundary, and hence the link between what is inside and what is outside window’s frame.

Sometimes this even contains, as said, markers of the enunciation that refer to the “Google Maps” style, complete with google marker place symbol. What is the meaning behind this kind of form, and what does this stylistic cypher hide in the process of construction of memory of the place of origin? The answer we think is in the concept of “navigation” (see in particular Fig. 4) as derived from Latour’s work on STS maps and visualizations. Several drawings include these stylistic features that transform the drawings into a unique discursive genre within the whole corpus. To navigate means once again to connect different spaces and points of view on a given territory: a zoom vision, a gaze on a specific detail and at the same time a sort of navigation “bar” that, as in video games, enables a panoramic vision and controlling vision; in other words, a different kind of observer and form of enunciation in the drawing/map (see Fig. 1). This feature connects some of our maps of places of origin to a ludic kind of vision, a “gaming” a dimension that is a familiar feature of the lives of all the authors of these maps, a dimension that produces new technological and navigable maps, whose textual and semiotic form is similar to that of games.

This form brings forth the idea of a sharing (or co-habitation) between the individual and the collective dimension. As if to say: in presenting the map of my origin in this way, I show you that this place has become potentially navigable and can provide you with conditions and instructions to navigate it. This is a huge socio-cultural transformation in the way of representing and presenting places and spaces of the origin: as de Certeau would have said, these cease to be a distant memory, but spaces that can be managed, navigated through tactics, strategies and practices that can be more or less complex. In other words, places are made “manageable” from an affective point of view by creating narrative pathways that can be shared. In one



Fig. 4 Navigable map

of the maps I have chosen, the place of origin is shown as a navigable route and yet the effect is moving. This route is contemplated by a family that is seen from the back and represented in a stylized fashion, reminiscent of those ancient maps in which the onlooker was represented on a hill, or on the margin of a city or a battle-field (Fig. 6).

It is yet another way to provide reading instructions, not necessarily through a map key for decoding signs, rather through gazes by active onlookers, or in some other cases toolbars, or again, maps within the maps. A map today seems therefore

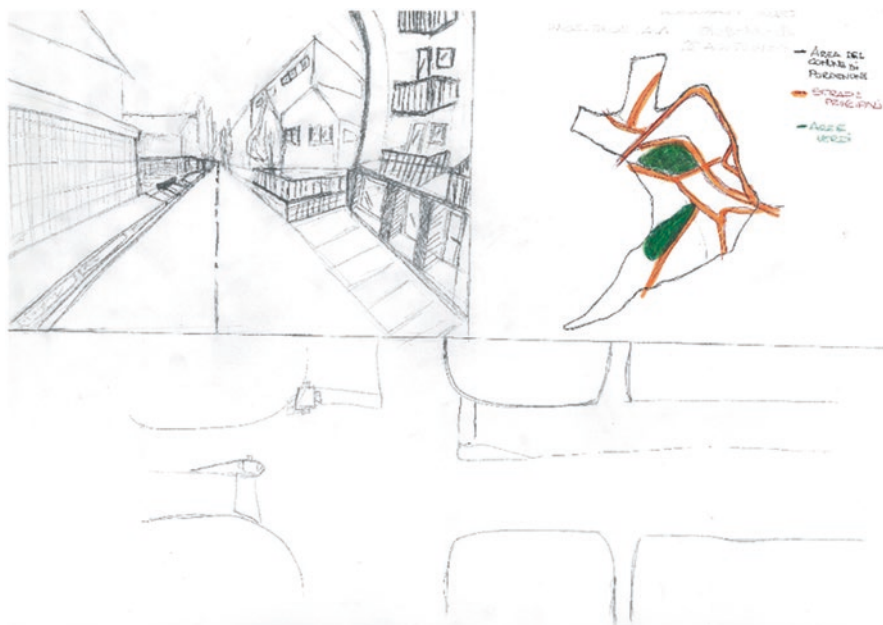


Fig. 5 Navigable map again screens and windows



Fig. 6 The onlooker in the landscape

to produce other maps that in turn become a new territory. We are faced in this way with an upturning of the well-known Korbynzki's axiom referred to by Bateson in his "map that is not the territory"<sup>11</sup> quoted in the famous Borges' short story, who in his turn, in a mis-en-abyme fashion refers to Lewis Carroll. And these intricate intertextual references could continue with Jean Baudrillard who proposes an extreme reading of this statement, not of the map of which only fragments remain but of the territory itself.

Electronic devices have transformed a map within a new navigable territory, providing new connections between people, places and things and producing perhaps new "Charts of Tenderness",<sup>12</sup> which means that, perhaps, young people today invent new forms of hybrid mapping, and that our whole culture is changing about the relationship between memory, places, and map forms.

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<sup>11</sup>As it is also noted in Giulia Mazzeo's, chapter "[Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis](#)", in this volume with reference to the psychological-narrative dimension of maps. For a further deepening concerning the discussion on Korbynzki's statement, see again Brotton 2012, cit.

<sup>12</sup>*La Carte du tendre* (Map of Tendre) is a French map of an imaginary land called *Tendre* by several authors. It appeared as an engraving in the first part of *Madeleine de Scudéry's* novel *Clélie* (1654–61).

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**Part II**  
**A Case-Study**

# Self-Mapping and Construction of the Identity: The Case Study of Two Twin Girls Between Past, Present and Future

Paola Donatiello

**Abstract** This chapter focuses on the analysis of maps drawn by two heterozygote adolescent twin girls that attend high school in a small town not far from their place of origin. Unlike the majority of other case studies that focus on university students who live far from their places of origin, in this case the subjects involved have not moved away completely, though they leave their place of origin every day for part of the day. Another difference from other case studies is the age of the subjects involved; they are teen-agers, in-between childhood – a period of their lives they have left behind – and adulthood – which they are headed towards. The main focus of this case study is the comparative analysis of the twin sisters’ representations of their place of origin. Though the sisters are heterozygotes twins and have spent all their lives in the same family and social environment, their graphic representations and verbal commentary on their drawings (which included a dialogue between the two girls) show marked differences. The comparative analysis includes the drawings of the two girls, their verbal commentaries, and satellite maps of their place of origin that were used to find and compare their respective representative choices, omissions and misrepresentations.

## 1 Introduction

The subjects interviewed in this case study belong to an age group younger than university students. Looking at this different age group highlights the role age plays in the representation of places of origin (on this see the introduction, to this volume). More particularly, the two girls, who were 16 when this study was carried out, are younger than the average age of the sample group as a whole. For privacy reasons henceforth they will be referred to as “subject of map 1” and “subject of map 2”.

The analysis of the relation between the geographical area, – a small town called Lavello in the province of Potenza – the subjects of this study, and the differences and

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similarities between their representations, allows a discussion and critical reflection on issues of identity<sup>1</sup> as connected to place of origin – taking into consideration the degrees of variability of representation related to the subjective dimension that emerges in the act of *self-mapping* (Donatiello 2017: 45–129). Our corpus can be defined as syncretic as it includes different types of texts – drawings, verbal discourses and screenshots from Google Maps – in which the elements do not belong exclusively to the emission or reception channel.<sup>2</sup> Particularly crucial are the syntactical-semantic characteristics of these three types of texts, relating to positioning, orientation and the sensible qualities of the world represented (Merleau-Ponty 1960 and 1964).

The question at the centre of this work is: “Should identity be considered in terms of a biological or social determinism?” If identity is pre-determined by a series of factors (including age, sex, genetic factors and socio-economic conditions), the representations provided by the two sisters should have been very similar. As this is not the case, one must then wonder: “How does a subject define himself/herself through his/her place of origin?”. A semiotic analysis of this question can shed light on how identity is articulated. “What is the relation between the drawing – that is to say the manifestation of the lived environment<sup>3</sup> – and what the subject *believes-to-be-true*, that is to say his *possible world*<sup>4</sup>? In what way can the drawing provide a *voice* for the place of origin and in what way can this *give voice* to the subject that has drawn its representation?”

From the comparative analysis of the discursivization processes, and of the different way various devices have been used, we will try to show how different values pertinent to the study of place of origin emerge.

## 2 The Place of Origin and Its Visual Representation

This section includes an analysis of the relationship between the subject and the drawing of the place of origin on an individual level. The visual analysis<sup>5</sup> will consider two related levels of spatial structuring: the space of the representation, that is to

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<sup>1</sup>Identity is an issue that is widely discussed in human sciences. Reflections on this issue here follow in the footsteps of James Clifford’s work (1988, 1997, 2013).

<sup>2</sup>To understand why the elements connected with the reception and emission channels are not in themselves a pertinent object for semiotics, see Greimas (1970:49–63 and 1984). To understand problems that arise from syncretism of manifestation languages in a corpus, see Del Ninno (1985).

<sup>3</sup>To understand the potentialities of the idea of “environment” in relation to lived experience see Ingold (2000 and 2013). In order to frame the terme “biome” in semiotic literature, see Greimas-Courtés (1986) and Donatiello (2017).

<sup>4</sup>The idea of “possible world” refers to Nelson Goodman’s article (1978:1–22) “Words, works, worlds”.

<sup>5</sup>Studies on these ideas have been elaborated in the work of *Groupe de recherches sémio-linguistique* in Paris. The terminology used by their authors is characterized by affinities and difference. On the idea of topology, figurative semiotics and plastic semiotic see Greimas (1976 and, 1984:12–20). On the idea of *énonciation abstraite*, see Calabrese (1987:35–40). Here the author elaborates four possible kinds of analysis on a two-dimensional surface, such as a painting; see also Louis Marin’s



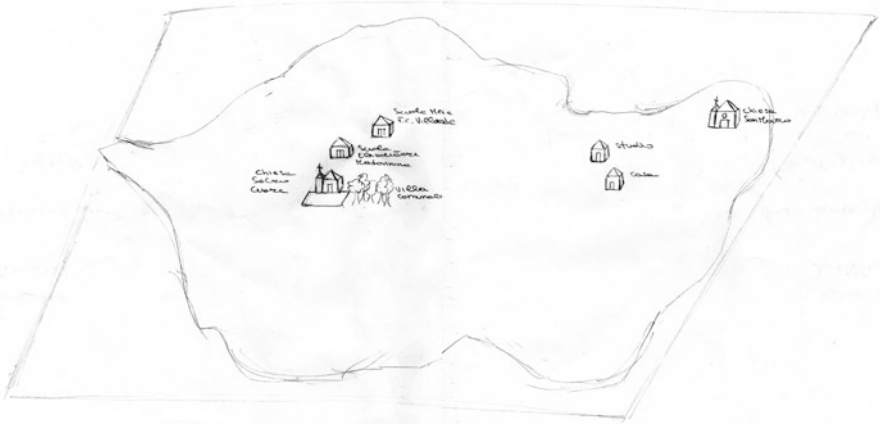


Fig. 1 Map 1

say the support on which the elements of the drawing are drawn, including their orientation and arrangement on the two-dimensional piece of paper; and the space represented, where the elements drawn are considered in relation to their intrinsic logic.

This analysis is completed by some considerations that are elaborated through analytical methods provided by Kevin Lynch's work (1960). Lynch singles out some organizational elements of urban space that are responsible for the formation of character and determine the imageability of a place: *paths* (elements with a strong imageability support movement), *edges* (barriers and delimitations), *districts* (broad units that often coincide with the way the urban space is divided up administratively), *nodes* (points of connections or conurbations internal to districts) and *landmarks* (elements of interest such as monuments). We will conclude this section with an analysis comparing each drawing with representations from Google Maps, in order to point out affinities and divergences between the hodologic and the chorographic point of view.<sup>6</sup> Before starting our analysis it should be noted that both maps are in black and white and devoid of place name indications<sup>7</sup> (see Figs. 1 and 6).

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(1994) terminology, in particular for terms such as *présentation* and *répresentation*. Concerning Marin, in the English edition (Marin 2001) the two levels (presentation, representation) are related by adding the suffix "re". Re-presentation indicates the level at which representation shows itself. To deepen the relationship between "image" and "story", see Lancioni (2009) and Marin (1984). For the semiotic debate around the Lynch's concept of "imageability", cf. Pozzato (2007).

<sup>6</sup>These ideas are borrowed from geography, and refer to a representation of space that considers the subject's perspective and past lived experience and a more objective representation of space respectively. For a more detailed definition of these see Bonazzi, chapter "Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries" and Frixia, chapter "The Representation of the Places of Origin: A Geographical Perspective" in this volume.

<sup>7</sup>As noted by the anthropologist Franco La Cecla, the omission of names of place makes it difficult to identify them: What happens when places have no name?" Let us think of a situation in which the name of the place in which we live is cancelled from memory. We cease to have any hold on them. We must indicate them with 'here' or 'there' [...] To accept to give up the name of one's place means to give up one's identity" (La Cecla 2000:50–53).

## 2.1 *Description of Map 1 and Comparison with Google Maps*

In the first map (Fig. 1) the place of origin is represented inside a parallelogram that in turn contains an irregular polygon which includes five trees, six buildings and seven pieces of writing. The parallelogram is sketched out in pencil and its sides are equidistant from the borders of the page. Between the two is an empty and blank space. The irregular polygon is traced with a dark pencil; on the left side it has a pointed shape and has the appearance of an irregular half moon with its two extremities pointing upwards. In the bottom right section it is curved, and in the upper part slightly elongated. The polygon almost touches the topological horizontal lines of the parallelogram. At the point in which the irregular outline is crossed by the vertical topological line that divides the paper in two, there is a slight narrowing in the upper and lower parts that form two inlets.

Inside this area two conurbations can be seen with a triangular topology; one is placed on the left and the other on the right. These are separated by a white space. The triangle on the left is made up of three layers. In the one at the bottom there are buildings, trees and, in writing, the words, “Chiesa Sacro Cuore” and “villa comunale”.<sup>8</sup> The middle layer, separated from the bottom one by a white space, contains a building with a door and a roof with the words, “Scuola Media F.C. Villareale”. The second conurbation on the right is made up of three figures, each of which is accompanied by three sets of writing. It has a triangular form with three vertexes: the first one has a building and the words “Chiesa San Mauro”; the second one also has a building and the word “studio”; in the lowest layer is the house of the subject with the word “home”.

The plastic contrast most in evidence is the one between areas that can be read as filled surfaces and those that can be read as voids. The perspective chosen by the subject is stratified, with a slightly three-dimensional sectional construction in which the buildings are represented in perspective. The drawing of the place takes up three quarters of the piece of paper from the central area; the edges of the paper have not been used as borders; instead it is the above-mentioned parallelogram that serves the function of establishing borders. The scale of representation is like the one of a standardised map of an urban centre. Despite its abstract character, the presence of some figurative elements makes possible a minimal imageability of this place (Lynch 1960). A faint referential illusion is created by the buildings, trees and writing, which acquires the role of principal informant (Fontanille 1989). The absence of human figures, animals and lines representing roads or paths is noticeable. The relationship between writing and figuration is balanced, in a ratio of 1:1. The edges of the irregular polygon provide a way of identifying the place; in fact these reproduce the shape of the village represented. As we will see through a comparison with the Google map, the scale of representation of these areas does not coincide with the scale of the district, but indicates the place of origin through a

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<sup>8</sup> Green area, park, indicated with “villa”. Here and henceforth the transcription of terms in inverted commas reproduces the small and big print as it appears in the drawing.



**Fig.2** Comparison between map 1 and the chorographic representation

synecdoche, using notes and landmarks (Lynch 1960:72–83) that here represent topological points.

The general effect produced is of fragmentation and rarefaction of the figurative component, a sense of suspension and stasis due to the absence of paths, so that public and private buildings seem to be placed where *one stops*. The act of delimiting the space with two frames powerfully inscribes in the text the enunciation instance; it provides the means for the subject's decisiveness in demarcating the limits and form of the represented space without having to adapt to the shape of the piece of paper. The comparison between this drawing and Google Maps (Fig. 2) shows that the form of the polygon represents accurately the borders of the village, especially the narrowing present to the south and the expansion on the north-west side.

The general orientation of the conurbation is reproduced with a different inclination compared to that offered by Google Maps, as if it was visualized with a compass pointed north-east and privileging the east-west orientation axis (Fig. 3).

Through a rotation of the Google Maps representation, one can note that the drawing provides a faithful representation of the direction from which one exits the town from the west side (that in the drawing is represented by the polygonal form), and of the pointed part on the right where the Chiesa di San Mauro is located. As a whole the centre of the town appears as if both its sides were compressed towards the centre, so much so that the double apex in the east side is not visible. The drawing omits the valley that separates the Pescarello district from the Caruso district



Fig. 3 Projection based on the East-West axis orientation of map 1 on chorographic representation



Fig. 4 projection of the references of map 1 in the chorographic representation of the Caruso and Pescarello districts

(Fig. 4), where the house and the “studio” – the workplace of the parents of the subject – are.

The studio, the house and the church are perceived hodologically and chorographically as if they were the highest points of a triangular configuration. And yet, in Google Maps, their orientation places the studio and the house north and the



**Fig. 5** Projection of the references of map 1 on chorographic representation of the Madonna district

church south. On the contrary, in the drawn representation the triangle is on the same plane; the highest point is represented by the church pointing towards the right, which contributes to the way the view of the east angle of the polygon is perceived. Despite the fact that the same configuration that keeps the three buildings together is still present, its orientation is turned upside down. In this way the public building is distanced and placed almost on the margin.

The omission of the valley that separates the Caruso district from Pescarello is not the only significant absence: the whole grid of streets and roads, the other districts and even landmarks that could be found in the vicinities of the areas mentioned are also missing. The group of landmarks on the left is very far away from the house of the subject, and the white spaces in the drawing contribute to highlighting the distances from one node to another. The conurbation on the left hand side of the drawing – a part of the Madonna district – is not in actuality shaped as a triangle, as it appears in the drawing, though the subject has made an attempt to maintain the general proportion of the distances (Fig. 5).

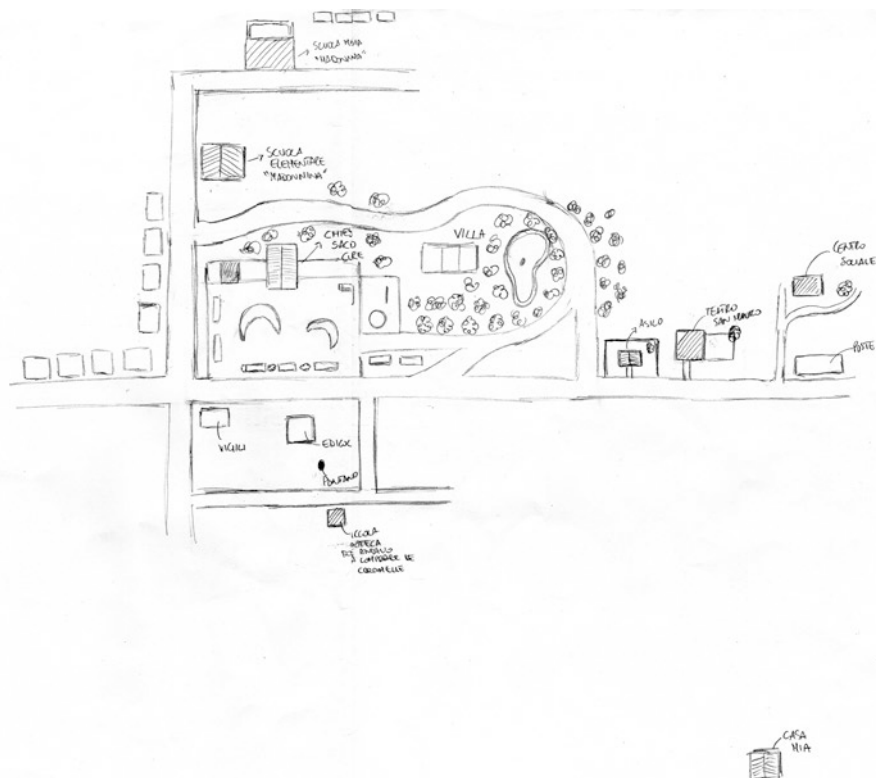


Fig. 6 Map 2

## 2.2 Description of Map 2 and Comparison with Google Maps

The map drawn by subject 2 shares differences and similarities with map 1. Here the representation of the place appears mainly in the upper central part of the piece of paper and extends up to the right edge of the page. No frames are present. The lower part shows a single figure in the lower right corner that represents the house of subject 2. The rest of the space is left empty. The map is mainly composed of rectangles or squares. These shapes also form the network of roads and buildings. Wide empty spaces and the inclusion of written captions associate it with the previous representation. However, this map shows a different distribution of figures in space. These are positioned around two main streets, one stretches vertically and the other horizontally. At the point in which the two streets meet, we find a complex conurbation where one can see a curved street that goes through the “VILLA”. This is emphasized by a group of trees and round forms. On the left of the villa is a square with a church and some stylized urban ornaments. In map 2 there are some buildings similar to those represented in map 1 with some additions: l’“ASILO”, il “TEATRO SAN MAURO”,

le “POSTE” and “CENTRO SOCIALE”, “VIGILI”, l’“EDICOLA”, a dark point with the writing “FONTANINO”<sup>9</sup> and “PICCOLA ENOTECA DOVE ANDAVO A COMPRARE LE CARAMELLE”.

The clearest plastic contrast is the one between the upper part – a filled surface – and the lower part – an empty surface. In this latter part, however, is the family house and, for this reason, it cannot be considered as a meaningless area. This point will be further discussed and clarified in a later part of this essay focusing on the drawing’s commentary. The focus of the subject shows a birds-eye view distinct from the mixture of frontal and birds-eye view that we have noted in the first drawing. Also in this case, in the lower part, the threshold of the representation does not coincide with the edge of the page; these are in fact separated by a white space. While her twin established a full framework for her drawing, the subject of map 2 makes a less strongly enunciative gesture in relation to the delimitation of place; the edge of the representation is provided by the upper edge of the piece of paper. She represents only a part of the village with a very sharp *focus*, the map constituting almost an enlargement of a specific area elaborated in detail. This is part of a district called Madonnina, the area where Piazza Sacro Cuore and the villa are located. The technique of the drawing simulates a “cartographical effect” – shown by the care with which roads are represented, and how the position of the buildings and other elements are represented in a chorographic style,<sup>10</sup> a typical style of map-making. The main elements of this style are: the choice of the panoramic point of view typical of the cartographical “portrait” (Marin 1994:202–218) of the map of a city, the detailed representation of crossings and routes that encompass urban entities made up of neighbourhood areas, and buildings that are indicated through rectangles and squares.

A further difference from the previous drawing, where roads and paths were not included, is that in this map these elements structure the representation of the depicted place (Lynch 1960:49–61). All main and secondary paths (that is to say the roads that surround the central macro-conurbations, the roads in the lower part and the alleys that provide further access) can be seen. Some of the paths are not closed and their openness suggests a sense of continuity with the rest of the map, and hence the partial character of the representation. This is different from map 1 that gave an idea of finiteness and closure.

In this second map there are no particularised edges (Lynch 1960:62–66); the most evident one is the white space that separates the upper part from the lower left corner, effectively an absent edge. The other one is an internal edge: the path that encloses the central macro-conurbation separates two nodes represented by a square with a church and a parking area. Next to the central node is another one made up of public buildings (the post-office, the social centre, the theatre and the

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<sup>9</sup>Regional idiom for a small public fountain with drinkable water usually in town centres. Another regional variant used in Rome is the word “nasoni”.

<sup>10</sup>On genres and techniques that have inspired our subjects while representing their place of origin see D’Armenio, chapter “Intermedial Editing in the Representations of Places of Origin” in this volume.

kindergarten) that function as landmarks. Above the central node there are two other public buildings – the schools – while in the lower part there is a public building, two commercial buildings and a private house, and one landmark represented by a public ornament, the “fontanino” (small fountain), represented in the drawing by a dark dot.

Comparatively we have less writing than figuration; despite the fact that the urban area is well structured, there are few toponomastic indications and these focus on the theme of the sacred: “MADONNINA”, “SACRO CUORE”, “SAN MAURO”. The rest of the buildings have generic denominations designating their functions as public spaces.

The imageability of the place of origin is realized by the presence of these generic denominations and structure. This map cannot, however, be taken as a scale representation of the district. The representation of the upper part is a precise depiction of this part of the place, but this is not the case with the lower part where the subject’s house is.

As in the previous case, no humans or animals are represented here either. Though this space is walkable, there are no cues that might suggest a specific directionality. The style used for the representation of landmarks is abstract and schematic, almost cartographical, with the sole exception of trees, circular forms with fringed edges near which the density of the stroke is generally speaking more marked. Movement is therefore more virtual than real. What is shown are roads that can be used, but in actual fact here, as in the previous case, a sensation of stasis is powerfully present. Through a comparison between the drawing and an aerial photograph of the small town in Google Maps (Fig. 7) one can note that the position of the house of the subject is almost arbitrary as far as the detailed area in the upper part of the piece of paper is concerned.

The distance between the house in question and the macro-conurbation is represented in the drawing through the empty margin. And yet, the orthogonal shape of the Madonna district is in evidence. (Fig. 8).

This does not correspond to the orientation in Google Maps. The district is drawn with a different inclination, as if one was visualising it with the compass pointing north-east (Fig. 9).

The curved section where the square and the villa meet is represented as if it was horizontal, omitting the distinction between Federico di Svevia<sup>11</sup> Street and Roma Street. The proportions of the distances between the buildings in the first street are instead rendered faithfully. Comparing the birds-eye view with the enlargement of the macro-conurbation on Google Maps (Fig. 9) on the left, the group of buildings that in the drawing is shaped as a symmetrical “L” represents a fixed landmark. The same can be said for the street that runs near it – Lombardia Street – though this does not have such a vertical orientation. At its extremity are the grounds of the Villareale secondary school and a council estate that overlooks Giovanni Falcone Square. In this case a *terrain-vague* that separates the secondary school building

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<sup>11</sup> Where the writings “ASILO”, “TEATRO SAN MAURO”, “POSTE”, “CENTRO SOCIALE” and the building they indicate are.





**Fig. 7** Comparison between map 2 and the chorographic representation



**Fig. 8** Visualisation of the chorographic representation of the node in the Madonna district in map 2 following the visualisation amendment



**Fig. 9** Visualisation of the chorographic representation in map 2 through east-west visualisation axis and according to a correction of the orthogonality of the node in the Madonna district

from the primary school is also omitted, though the two buildings are in fact divided by a substantial blank space. In the drawing a street with a round contour that delimits the macro-conurbation is included. In Google Maps this corresponds with the green belt area near the park entrance in Lombardia Street. The drawn path, though visible in the photographic representation, is important for the subject's lived experience; she often walks in the park. Following the delimiting path toward the right hand side, one stumbles into a bean-shaped element – a public fountain – and the rectangular structure of the bowling area. Following the path around the bend, one can see a detailed representation of the internal road around the villa that converges towards Federico di Svevia Street and its three entrances, which in the drawing are reduced to two. The delimiting path terminates in the Sacro Cuore square. The drawing seems to omit a second *terrain-vague*,<sup>12</sup> while the playground near the entrance of the villa on the side of the square (i.e. the rectangle that includes a line and a circle) is emphasized. In the Google representation this is hidden, showing that representations such as these, contrary to common belief, are not “real”. The presence of benches is also evident; these are situated in double outlet on the delimiting path and inside the square; they are represented by polygons with pointed corners and further rectangular forms to emphasize that the square functions as a place where one can linger. The playgrounds are eliminated completely from the Sacro Cuore complex, however the bell tower is rendered faithfully; this is connected to the central body of buildings, showing the presence of a continuous facade that connects the elements of this complex. If the proportions of the *piccola enoteca*, the *fontanino* and the *edicola* are maintained, the dimensions of the polyfunctional building, on the left of the district in the centre of the page, are smaller and they only include the traffic wardens' building.

The comparison between the two maps will be illustrated in the next paragraph. Here however, we can already briefly conclude that despite a higher figurative density in map 2 (map 1 is much simpler) in this map there are also important omissions (for example the wide *terrain-vague* that separates the two schools and the details

<sup>12</sup> Playground part of the parish centre.

of the square). This map also conveys an impression of immobility and abstraction because of the birds-eye view. Further, map 1, despite its minimal elements, reproduces faithfully the shape of the village, while map 2 only represents a selected area that does not include the house, but only places of social recreation or features connected to the school. The two drawings show different ways of providing an objective view and of showing personal elements connected with lived experiences and emotions. In the first drawing the *generalities* of the place prevail, even in the insertion of the subject's house. In the second drawing, despite the birds-eye point of view, personal elements are predominant (i.e. the choice of representing only a part of the village), as well as the possibility of an openness towards an elsewhere, and the failure to integrate domestic space within the town, testified by the way the home is represented far away from the area drawn.

### 3 Maps of the Place of Origin as Discourse

In the previous paragraph the absence of colour and the frequent blank spaces were pointed out as common features of the two maps.<sup>13</sup> The comparison with Google Maps provided us with information about these empty areas; from these maps we have seen that blank spaces are not the only way to eliminate elements from the representation; this happened for example in map 2 through the enlargement of an area leading to the exclusion of all the other elements, or through the omissions of all the roads in map 1. As noted, the first map is slightly more precise in terms of proportions and distances and the attempt to focus on the place of origin in general; this is, in fact, delimited – albeit in an approximate way – and included within a second shape. What is noticeable, however, is a further elimination of elements, as if to say that the place of origin is not *practicable* – that is to say it is a space where one is suspended, and cannot be occupied. The place of origin emerges and appears as a space in which lived experience is expressed through very specific landmarks that are precisely placed as if the subject expressed herself through their collocation, eliciting a reaction from whoever gazes at the drawing and providing the latter with an awareness of boundaries and the stratification of the place rather than practical indications that might facilitate living in that place. The few elements and the way in which these are positioned provide a very precise idea of place and, at the same time, a condensed representation; this map in fact occupies only a small portion of the space available on a A3 piece of paper, or in the articulation of the city presented on Google Maps.

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<sup>13</sup>This could be connected with place of origin's as non-grammatical space that makes it similar with the mother language. As a matter of fact white spaces could be interpreted in different ways, as can be seen in Pozzato (Chapters "[Introduction](#)", "[Genres of Maps of Places of Origin. A Semiotic Survey](#)") and Mazzeo's (Chapter "[Maps of Early Childhood Places or Self Maps? A Graphic and Conversational Analysis](#)") essays in this volume.

The representation of map 2 is more accurate and in relation to the style and features represented it is reminiscent (though not homologous) to the chorographic map. And yet, comparing it with Google Maps one can note some omissions and dislocations. Not only does the map represent a specific area of a physical place – a node – but it also omits elements that are effectively present but are not deemed relevant to maintain the degree of coherence and cartographical accurateness that the subject wants. The rectilinear delimiting paths are positioned next to other elements that are also rectilinear and devoid of detail (like for example the series of “inverted L shaped” blocks on the left); these help those who do not know the area to find an orientation, to see it on an electronic device and imagine its morphology.

In respect of orientation, it has been noted that neither correspond to the conventional north-south orientation (which can be modified through the *locative medium* function); both representations have a north-east orientation and privilege an east-west axis. The morphology of place seems to condition the orientation of its representation in the translation of its position on the hodologic plane compared to the drawing, which appears to be a mix of two frames of reference: the hodologic and the chorographic.

An example of this is the representation of the public villa, which is more detailed in map 2. If we compare the representation of this element in the drawing with the one in the chorographic representation in Google Maps some differences concerning the morphology can be noted; namely the parkways and the internal elements cannot be seen. The detailed representation of the curved path, of the fountain and of some of the benches show elements connected to perception – local and global – which is connected to the subject’s point of view and the way the subject has experienced that place. Though the subject has chosen a birds-eye view, the representation appears as if it was realized from below. The curved delimiting path includes the macro-conglomeration at the centre, delimits an area that is treated in a very detailed way – the area of the square and of the villa – and offers specific indications on how one should traverse this space.

According to De Certeau, two discursive planes are possible in relation to urban space: the first is indicated by the term map, the second by the term path. The first one uses a device that allows a birds-eye view, as can be noted by the reflections on the view from the World Trade Centre (De Certeau 1984:115–130): the map is configured as a plan that gathers together and prescribes all the possible paths, inhibiting at the same time an experience of space. By the term path, De Certeau indicates a lived and experienced space (De Certeau 1984:91–110). While the space of the map can be experienced only through reading, the process of selection and realization of a path:

begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these ‘real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city’ (De Certeau 1984:97).

The plan delineated with the word path is connected with the concept of pedestrian speech act:

At the most elementary level, it has a triple enunciative' function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an 'allocation', 'posits another opposite' the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action) (De Certeau 1984:97–98).

The curved and circular directionality of the path inside the node in map 2 invites a mobile gaze even though this is not explicitly indicated with human figures or arrows. The presence of trees, the only form of non-human life in the drawing, surrounds the gaze; this is different in the Google Map representations where this is an obstacle to the visibility of the path. It is possible in this case to talk about a case of *enunciated enunciation*<sup>14</sup> (Greimas and Courtés (1979:125–128), of the morphology of the paths of places of origin drawn. This emerges as a portion of a whole of which we cannot find out more than its existence. It can be noted through the form of the peripheric extremities of the paths, which remain open, providing an indication that these lines continue elsewhere. The curvilinear delimitation – an indication that this path can be walked through – involves the observer directly, offering him a practical model. These characteristics of the place of origin do not encourage it to be shared with the Other. Even though the house is closer to the subject – according to the criteria of frequency and belonging – this is still separated from the configuration represented in the upper part of the piece of paper. Lastly, there are no indications of place names with the sole exception of those connected with landmarks that also appear in the first drawing.

In the next paragraphs the two girls' comments will provide a background and an indication of the system of values that have inspired these two drawings.

## 4 Discourses on the Maps

The third section of the survey concerns a brief comment on the drawings and a comparison with cartographical representation. When the two drawings were put next to the Google Maps representation both subjects reacted with a momentary feeling of estrangement, though only one (the subject of map 1) reacted verbally and said, with reference to her drawing: "it is really ugly!"

The two subjects compared in a detailed way the elements they had drawn and their representation in Google Maps. To make the analysis easier their comments have been divided into two parts – an initial and a final one – between the two a transition is marked by one entirely spontaneous question (the only one in the whole interview). In the first part the subjects spoke of the place through the drawing, or in

<sup>14</sup>Metalanguage term. In french "énonciation énoncée).

any case the drawing was the starting point for their reflection; the cartographical representation was referred to as a way to compare the geographical place with the place represented. The second part of the verbal commentary does not refer to the representation, and no elements concerning the drawn frame of reference are mentioned; the whole commentary is structured around general reflections on the subjects' relation with the place of origin.

The perspective and point of view in both drawings are different from standard satellite imagery. This was also noted by the subjects, who, during the comparative analysis with the chorographic representation, provided some reflections on the choices of what to represent and of the point of view.

In respect of map 1, with particular reference to the median delimitation line with a polygonal shape that includes landmarks and writing, the subject declared to have "drawn the boundaries around Lavello because this is surrounded by the countryside, and this is unimportant in relation to the town". Then she added in a peremptory tone, "It is Lavello that I wanted to draw". The representation of the place of origin starts from a specific boundary that traces the difference between a place and its other, between town (with its topological limits) and the countryside that is defined as "insignificant" in relation to the centre of town. This encourages an interpretation of the white space as constituting what is different from the town. The subject added: "I have drawn Lavello *in this way* to try to give *an idea of a three-dimensional perspective*<sup>15</sup>". She then expressed her intention to represent her place of origin in line with her lived experience and in particular she tried to explain her perception of the three-dimensional space from a hodologic point of view. While commenting on this, the subject of map 1 referred to the parallelogram that contains the representation which seems to be a device to contrast the two-dimensionality of the piece of paper. This irregular geometrical form is meant to provide both the shape of the boundaries of the city and the three-dimensional lived space in the place of origin as experiential place. The subject further commented that "if on the one hand Lavello *seems all the same* and one cannot see the difference between one place and another, on the other this is not so, there are differences". This comment draws attention between the node in the left-hand side of the piece of paper and the one on the right. The first is included in an urban environment structured in an orthogonal way. The second node is positioned in a portion characterized by the constant reference to height: the use of the parallelogram, the use of the triangular configuration between the house, the church and the studio and their positioning at the extremity of the boundary marking its distance from the other node, its proximity with the east corner and the subject's awareness of the valley that separates the districts of Caruso and Pescarello.

For what concerns the framing of map 2, which is made up of a detailed *focus*, the subject said: "I don't know the precise dimension, I did not think it was right to limit the effective dimensions, also because I think and I am aware that another part of Lavello exists, it is not in my drawing but ... *it exists*". The choice of providing exact details points to a conflict between different frames of reference; significant in

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<sup>15</sup> Here and henceforth we use the italics to express emphasis.

this respect is the expression “I did not think it was fair”. In respect of *lived* space, the subject seems to be aware of the existence of an *other* space, that is not shown in the drawing, but exists in a frame of reference, and which is different from the one that has provided its focalization. The style of representation chosen has a cartographical character and shows a mixture of the chorographic and hodologic points of view. This has forced the subject to adopt a precise representation of space that is impossible to extend to the whole town, because the subject does not know the precise chorographic dimensions. This choice points to the subject’s intention to create coherence between two points of view – the point of view of the map and the point of view of the lived space. This is expressed through the elimination of whole areas and, at the same time, with a very detailed representation that corresponds only partially to the frame of reference and shared orientation.

It can also be noted that during the comparison between the drawings and the Google representations, criticism, amendments and further specifications were made. For example, both subjects remarked that most of the centre was excluded from their drawings. From this reflection others have arisen. The lack of the subject in the representation has caused both girls to specify that the place of origin is the place where they both live; in this space they move mainly by car and on foot; public transport is used only in the morning to go to school.

In both drawings various school buildings are landmarks, but their school does not have a place on the map; this is in a nearby town and, according to both girls “it is not part of the place of origin”. From a spatial point of view, this omission can be variously explained: for subject of map 1 to include the school in the place of origin would have meant to destroy the coherence that binds the elements represented and that define the place of origin – that is to say “Lavello” – in relation to a rural space that, according to her, is not relevant. For subject of map 2, it would also have destroyed the coherence that connects the elements represented and delimits the place of origin as a precise locus, as a part of the town which in turn is included in an existing urban space that however lacks any relevance for the subject.

Moreover, the representation of both places of origin is temporally suspended, or at the very least situated in the past (this is particularly true for the subject of map 2). Therefore the school that both subjects attend at the moment of the drawing cannot find a collocation as it does not belong to that past time. In the verbal commentary, this temporal marker, a reference point adopted by both subjects, enhances their place of origin as one that is temporally removed from their daily lives, their habits and *routine*. Lavello as it is drawn and Lavello as it is lived on a daily basis are two different places and at times a process of hybridization between the two takes place. For the subject of map 2, for example, the place of origin is the space of memories, associated with special moments, while the school that she attends at the time of the drawing introduces a dysphoric element: “high schools are in the present and they are not a nice memory .... I don’t like at all the idea of including them in my drawing”.

The verbal commentary also focused on the dimensions of the “villa”. Compared with the town and its conformation in Google Maps, the villa appears “bigger than it seems when you are inside” (subject map 2). Concerning map 2, the subject

commented about the drawing of the park: “*only* the villa is different”. She expressed satisfaction in relation to the coherence of this element in the Google Maps and to her ability to position elements following a cartographical style – “the houses are drawn in a similar way”. The subject then provided a reason for her detailed representation of the system of roads, saying that she represented these in that way in order to “clarify the drawing”, confirming her intention to involve the reader in the drawing. Lastly, the girls explained calmly and clearly the choice of positioning their house arbitrarily in relation to the rest of the town and separated from this by an empty edge: “Our house is far away from the rest of the world!” This statement shows that, though the subject has no knowledge of the specific chorographic dimensions of the physical space, she is familiar with the experiential distances, which can be translated only if the lived experience is adopted as the system of description. Though it is represented in an objectifying style, the place of origin drawn in map 2 appears to be a well-known place that is clearly separate from the geographical space that contains it.

The verbal commentary and drawings show that neither subject chooses to represent paths with a precise orientation, as is typical, for aesthetic and historical motivations, in drawings of places important to the collective historical memory. The only exception is represented by a brief commentary by the subject of map 2: “the view of the Pescarello<sup>16</sup> is not bad, but Lavello is not managed well, the administration could do better”. The *aesthetic* image of the place, though it has been mentioned in the verbal commentary by the subject of map 2, coincides with its stereotypical, static and partially dysphoric image. The roads represented, on the other hand, have been chosen following another kind of logic: “they are important streets, in which I have lived. When I think about this, I think about everything that has happened, not just in school but also outside” (the subject map of 2). The paths represented are singled out by the subject of map 2 because they express a spatial-temporal dimension connected with memory and remembrance. The logic that determines verbal tenses and the space represented creates the possibility of reflecting on temporal and spatial processes connected to the place of origin. Generally, this can be defined as a place of carefully placed landmarks that are in the subject’s thoughts and that continue to exist in relation to a space and time connected to the subject’s lived experience. The space represented in the drawing is connected with the subject’s temporal and *evenementielle* experience, which is defined in the past tense and through precise landmarks, but that in the verbal commentary appears to be characterized by duration.

In relation to map 1, the subject said that she did not represent the roads “to provide an idea of the distance [of the node represented on the right-hand side] from the Pescarello [on the left]”; she also added in relation to the chorographic dimensions of the area where the house, the studio and San Mauro church are located, “I did not expect it to be so small”. The verbal commentary began in relation to the area on the

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<sup>16</sup>It is significant to note that this view can be considered a generic image of the town (postcard image); this is often used as public image for official events, tourist photos, artistic photos. See Pozzato on “monumentalization” of places in some maps of places of origin.



right. This shows the orientation of subject's reading, and also provides an idea of the way the place is experienced, one that contrasts with the westward reading indicated by the page – from left to right – and which confirms the predominance of the East-West axis. The girl's comment in relation to this was: "I haven't drawn the maps for logistic reasons. The road has no value, excluding the *corso*. Roads do not mark any special event" (subject of map 1). The discourse of the place of origin in map 1 seems to confirm the creation of a suspended effect; it constructs a spatial-temporal dimension that is closed and circumscribed, in which only the landmarks that are drawn have a precise value, and in which the elimination of the rest of the town appears to be a conscious choice. The white spaces express that which in the physical territory *has no value*.<sup>17</sup> Landmarks arrange in a precise manner the configuration of the place. The narration is not linear, especially on a temporal level. In the same way in which the town is separated clearly from what it is not, so the place of origin is delimited in a closed dimension, as if it was a snapshot that follows a spatial and temporal logic different to that of lived experience. The subject of map 1 justifies the elimination of paths with a logistic reason concerning the different ways in which space is traversed that does not depend on precise experiential values. The geographical place and its paths appear "all the same", that is to say they do not have a particular value. The choice between one or the other does not depend on strategic factors,<sup>18</sup> connected to the dimension of memory or of aesthetic significance.

The only path that is pointed out in the verbal commentary of both subjects is "il corso" (Roma street, A.N.), represented only in map 2; and it is related not so much to the place of origin as to habitual movement in the present time – for example having a stroll with friends. A further indication in the verbal commentaries about the choice of paths is also connected with the present time, but this does not mention place names: both subjects choose roads in relation to the possibility of meeting friends along the way (subject map 1), and in relation to the illumination on the way back home (subject map 2).

The node represented on the left in map 1 and in the upper section in map 2 is defined as a place where both girls usually spend time. The first part of the verbal commentary concludes with some considerations that show that the two subjects share the same feelings concerning their house: both feel that is "far away from all the rest".

During the verbal commentaries, no explicit reflections emerged that could separate the "public" lived experience with the "private" one. The only element that distinguishes these two is highlighted through the topology in the drawing: both subjects put their house in the right on the piece of paper and the node related with their public existence – present and past – on the left. Lastly the public villa is seen

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<sup>17</sup> On this see Pozzato on "negation of place" in this volume.

<sup>18</sup> Particular paths that are frequently experienced because they are connected to specific events and whose representation could contribute to their evocation are not represented here. Also absent are those strategic paths that facilitate the movement from A to B.

by both as “the only green spot in the town” – though Google Maps shows that the town has other green nodes and is surrounded by countryside.

This last feature is significant as it opens up a new dimension of the verbal commentary. The exclusion of the countryside seems to be a conscious choice and its inclusion in the verbal commentary is revealing; in this regard the two subjects expressed some evaluations through the insertion of synesthetic elements. The subject of map 2 remarked, “In my representation of the place of origin I could have included the sea rather than the countryside<sup>19</sup>”. The subject of map 1 declared: “in the end, even though we live in a town, the two of us are close to the countryside; when, for example, in the morning I hear the cockerel, and I think that I am in a town . . . it brings to mind how backward this place is”. The elimination of the countryside, therefore, is not just connected with lived experience, but also to a general and common opposition between town and countryside, urban and rural environment, where the latter becomes synonym of inurbanity (Donatiello 2015:286–289). This seems to subtly but significantly condition the “present” lived experience of the two subjects.

## 5 Place of Origin and Construction of Subjectivity

In the last part of the verbal commentary, there are some statements connected to the geographical place that contribute to the way this is constructed by the two subjects. These reflections show the spatial-temporal intertwining between Lavello and the place of origin and between past and present.

The first aspect to emerge during the conversation is subjective; Lavello is “the place where I was born”<sup>20</sup> (subject map 2). The place of origin as place of *birth* is symbolic and processual: “Lavello is the place of my memories” (subject map 2). In this first part of the conversation the physical place and the place of origin intertwine: the place of origin is a sort of ground zero that serves to locate the process of construction of the subject. The subjective dimension emerges as a mnemonic activity; the subject is constructed through a discourse that proceeds through the accumulation of experiences and memories.

This initial comment is followed by others, according to a logic that sees an ever increasing abstraction and generalization and locates the subject outside of herself: “Lavello like all small towns is a quiet place” (subject map 2), where “everything is easily reachable on foot” (subject map 1). These statements concern the overall perception that both subjects have of the town – place of origin and its internal organization structure. Lavello is a place where distances are walkable and everything necessary for one’s existence is at hand. These reflections point to the progressive transformation of the point of view in the discourse; here the lived dimension in the

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<sup>19</sup>“Sea” is a system of description element and indicates the place where both subjects used to have summer vacations. This is in a different region from the place of origin.

<sup>20</sup>The place of birth of both subjects is near Melfi.

present is contaminated with the past subjective experience, through strategic comments: the town-place of origin thanks to its structural features, aids and makes possible the “construction of human relations”<sup>21</sup> (subject map 2).

The point of view through which the relation between geographical place and place of origin is considered progressively shifts from a personal centred dimension – referring to birth and memory – to a partially external one that extends in geographical space and at its boundaries and whose objects are the general perception of the place, the strategic possibilities offered by its structure and the relations that space makes possible between the subjects and their peers. In this phase of the commentary place of origin and physical space mix together. The tone of these initial considerations is positive.

The limits of the place are constructed through a discourse that highlights the differences between two elements, one of which is the countryside. Its presence defines Lavello as a “backward” place (subject map 1). The rural dimension is perceived stereotypically in a negative way and as a consequence the urban area has a positive value. The place of origin’s in-between condition between the urban and rural explains its characteristics of backwardness and represents the central motivation for shifting the point of view of the verbal commentary outside the centre of the town: Lavello is a place where “the distances that separate different towns are long even if they are actually short” (subject map 2); the lack of proper transportation between towns and other localities nearby in the Vulture-Melfese area, only a few kilometres away,<sup>22</sup> does not allow the subject to move around. The tone of the commentary here changes and becomes rather critical.

There is also a change in the quality of lived experience in the place of origin: initially this is viewed positively as ground zero where the subject is born and within which lived experiences are internally accumulated as memory. The perception of the place of origin changes from a place that emanates a sense of peace to one that *forces* on the subject immobility; from a structured urban space that offers advantageous strategic possibilities, to a place lived *in the present, a space of repetition*: “Lavello, like all small towns does not offer many attractions, though this is the same for all places where life is *routine*” (subject map 2).

The tone of this commentary changes totally with the following concluding declarations: “Lavello is a small town! You cannot have your own identity” (subject map 1). This change of tone (which corresponds to the passage from the “strategic can-do” to the almost *absolute* “cannot do”) is followed by a request from the interviewer for clarification. The subject of map 1 answers, illustrating a specific case: “for example, if you dress in a certain way, the others tend to put labels on you”. The inclusion of the collective dimension (confirming a contamination between place of origin and place where the subject’s every day, ordinary experience takes place) points to a conflict. These reflections show that the construction of identity is lived in a confrontational way in relation to the specific structure of the town as lived in

<sup>21</sup> “Even if you *waste time* and stay with friends in the end you have fun” (subject map 2).

<sup>22</sup> We are talking about 15–40 km; these kind of distances can be easily covered only if you possess your own means of transport.

the present. This conflict emerges in the contrast between general and specific statements. The conversation continues with the following statement: “with the passing of years one grows up, but if one day you decide to act differently<sup>23</sup> they judge you” (subject map 1).

To the temporal dimension of the place of origin as ground zero, the place where one is born and grows up and changes, another dimension is added: one of the town as lived in the present, where the conflicts typical of the evolution and development of subjectivity emerge; during adolescence “the challenge is to begin to assert the independence which will lead them to maturity” (Jones and Cunningham 1999:28).

This progressive transformation of space and time culminates with a comparison with metropolitan cities: “this would not happen in Rome” (subject map 1). The comparison with Rome was mentioned by the subject of map 2, who was more open to dialogue. From this moment on, her reflections were shared by the subject of map 1, whose approval, however, was expressed only through gestures. The metropolitan dimension, where one can also live a daily routine, includes “a crowd of people” (subject map 2). The variety offered in a bigger space makes possible a situation where “nobody bothers you” (subject map 2).

If on the one hand, space and time in a small town offer the possibility of constructing human relations, to be born and become subjects, on the other hand to complete this process of construction of identity requires breaking away from the routine; to become individuals means to mix in the crowd, to lose oneself in a way that appears paradoxical and that sees the process of identity construction as closely linked to a dimension of anonymity, a dimension where the negative judgement of the Other is absent – whether this Other is another individual or the whole community.

The dimension of the small town allows a confrontation with the Other, but at the same time it also forces the subject to come to terms with a negative aspect connected with this process; the metropolis makes you realize “how small Lavello is .... *Another reality!*” (subject map 2).

Through these reflections the subject’s point of view goes beyond the geographical boundaries of the place of origin and its spatial-temporal logic; it becomes external to oneself and considers *foreign and other* that which a moment earlier was considered the *originary topological centre*. After this transformation, aspects that previously were indicated as strategic advantages start to have negative effects – including boredom and forced homologation of the lived experiences (subject map 2). The metropolis moreover introduces another dimension that is connected to the construction of the identity of the subject, the dimension of *choice*: “in Rome they are all different, diversity stimulates curiosity” (subject map 2).

A wider spatial-temporal dimension offers more and more varied possibilities. After birth and childhood development, the subject goes through a transformation: if the subject in the place of origin expressed herself through the opposition

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<sup>23</sup>In relation to what, to *routine*? To the *norm*? These could have been the possible questions that were not asked to avoid to the condition the commentary.

“can-do” and “cannot-do”, with the introduction of choice and the change of the spatial-temporal dimension, the construction of identity happens through the opposition *being-able-to-do* and *being-able-not-to-do*.

At the end of the commentary, both subjects agreed that “Lavello is a place in which you cannot have your own identity”. Neither referred to it as place of origin but as a geographical space in the present. Seen from this latter point of view, Lavello loses its initial dimension of possibilities and tranquillity, and becomes a *place of transit*. For both subjects the ideal dimension at the time of the interview is the metropolitan one, where they can see the possibility of successfully completing their process of construction of identity.

The verbal commentary on the drawings and their comparison with Google Maps concludes with another definition, shared by both subjects, that sounds like a slogan, and seems intrinsically paradoxical: “identity is diversity”.

Both subjects clarified further this statement; by the word identity the subject of map 1 means, “to be oneself and have the possibility of acting without fear of being judged”. The subject of map 2 understands identity as the possibility of “expressing oneself physically and mentally”. The verbs employed – *to be* (subject map 1) and *to express oneself* (subject of map 2) – could appear at first sight synonymous, in actual fact they express a different value if considered in relation to one another: the first one is a punctual experience, the second one expresses duration. Another difference is that while for the subject of map 1 identity is closely connected with the relationship with other individuals, and a dysphoric value is placed on the collective dimension, for the subject of map 2 identity remains connected exclusively with the individual sphere; this is like a shell whose external part coincides with the physical sphere and the internal one with the mental one. This shell contributes to differentiate between the subject and the collective dimension, to which positive values are attributed.

## 6 Conclusion

This concluding paragraph deals with the definition that the two subjects have given of the term “place of origin”. The subject of map 1 defined place of origin as “the place where I was born and to which I feel I belong”. The kind of relation that defines both subject and place is a relation of belonging, of *inhérence*,<sup>24</sup> that connects with the theme of feeling oneself to be *local* or *localized*.<sup>25</sup> As noted by Franco La Cecla (2000:33) “locality is the possession of a place by its inhabitant and vice-versa. You can also call this ‘appartenenza’, the Italian translation of *belonging* [...] that is active for both places and people”.

<sup>24</sup>For results of research work on this idea that are significant for this study, see Marsciani (2014:18).

<sup>25</sup>See Merleau Ponty (1945, 1960, 1964).

The semantic fields of these terms articulate a physical and corporeal realm – birth as “the emergence of a baby or other young from the body of its mother” (New Oxford American Dictionary) – and one that is experiential and environmental – birth as “the start of life as a physically separate being” (New Oxford American Dictionary). Moreover birth is connected with a beginning and is characterized as a movement forward from a ground zero, and, at the same time, as “a person's origin, descent, or ancestry” (New Oxford American Dictionary) and therefore as something that connects backwards towards one's ancestry and origins, seen as a continuous line on which the individual is placed. This research shows that both girls, despite their young age, perceive their origins as temporally distant. This sense of distance is generally felt also during transitional moments in the individual's existence and also when the individual lives in the place where he is born, or lives a phase of transformation in-between childhood and adulthood. The theme of memory, of the reconstruction of a lived environment as space-time that follows its own intrinsic logic, and the theme of nostalgia<sup>26</sup> are always present in the individual life regardless of the age of the subjects and the place in which they live.

A particular instance of the idea of place of origin as a locus from which one can look forward or backwards can be recognised in the definition that the subject of map 2 gave: place of origin is “the place with which I share my memories”. This is the map where place is drawn with a wealth of detail; and yet, the representation of certain paths that are left open, the comparison between life in a small town and in a big city, and the arbitrary positioning of the subject's house suggest that the subject of map 2 faces transformation with an open attitude. This contradicts her attitude during the interview, during which she appeared shy, often allowing her twin sister to interrupt her. The subject of map 1, on the contrary, through the enunciative gesture of the delimitation of her place of origin, her strong opinions on what Lavello is not, and the peremptory character of some of her statements shows a closed attitude that contradicts her behaviour during the interview in which she appeared to be strong and self-confident.

The temporal dimension connected with the theme of the place of origin shows that the latter can be considered a multifaceted object and hybrid, residing in-between a corporeal and geographical sphere and an experiential one. The place of origin can be defined as a complex term that shows temporal syncretism; diachronic possibilities where memory and the past are not the only components that play an important role. Besides these factors one needs to also consider the history of the present, daily life, and future projections, in particular when the place of origin is related to an individual's rites of passage.

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<sup>26</sup> For results of research work on this idea that are significant for this study, see Greimas (1983:213–223) and Panosetti and Pozzato (2013).

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**Part III**  
**Dataset Analysis**

# Geographical Imagination and Memory: Maps, Places, Itineraries

Alessandra Bonazzi

*To ask for a map is to say, "Tell me a story".*

Peter Turchi

*Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed  
in space, the sounder they are.*

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

**Abstract** This chapter considers the dynamic nature of the relationship between place, memory and identity, with reference to a map of Terténia drawn by A.M. This is pursued in three ways. First, via a discussion which argues that topography and biography, memories and maps are closely connected. Second, through an analysis of the map with reference to the formal categories defined by Gunnar Olsson and Kevin Lynch. It follows that the map is characterized by a “comprehensible appearance” and points to intrinsic meanings. Comprehensible appearance implies an implicit connection between place of origin and identity; intrinsic meanings refer to the function of the map, whose overall meaning is *geographically imagined as post-journey*. The map will thus related to the category of hodologic space, as defined by Pietro Janni and inspired by the work of memory of the specific category of geographers whose work was aimed at providing full sense and coherence to the places they explored. Third, in a survey of the toponymy in the map, between memory and experience. What appears on this map of routes is the very personal signs of the *explorer* that inscribes itself in place of the existing toponymy of Terténia, and presupposes some form of appropriation of the place itself. The chapter passes over the established ideas of place and identity to arrive at the idea that place and identity are from time to time processes constructed and imagined in a complex and dynamic game of topicality, position and forgetting.

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## 1 Introduction: “For a Successful Excavation a Plan, Truth Is Needed”

I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map. First I envisaged an ordinary map, but now I would incline to a general staff’s map of a city center, if such a thing existed. Doubtless it does not, because of ignorance of the theatre of future wars. I have evolved a system of signs, and on the gray background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked in the houses of my friends and girl friends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the “debating chambers” of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of the Communist youth, the hotel and brothel rooms that I knew for one night, the decisive benches in the Tiergarten, the ways to different schools and the graves that I saw filled, the sites of prestigious cafés whose long-forgotten names daily crossed our lips, the tennis courts where empty apartment blocks stand today, and the halls emblazoned with gold and stucco that the terrors of dancing classes made almost the equal of gymnasiums.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to start with Walter Benjamin’s masterful cartography from *Berliner Chronik*.<sup>2</sup> The above quotation traces the possibility for memory, of finding in the grey topography of the city of Berlin, places, routes, events and connections. In other words, it endows cartographic space with the power to synchronically represent the past. Cartographic spaces sustain a colourful planimetry of memory articulated by personal coordinations of experiences and through temporal scales. To colour fragments of this space also means to transgress the continuity and the authority of the colour grey, to superimpose the official topography of Berlin made up of distances and places with a “self-topography”, a personal mediation composed of a constellation of places and routes. It means, in short, to start a performative act of appropriation that gives form to the dynamic relation between places and identity (Heddon 2008). Edward Said would have called this “imaginative” geography; a sur-plus to objective knowledge that sediments through a prejudice (Said 1978: 54–55). With reference to Benjamin’s map, the prejudice depends on his position and distances depend on memories. The act of playing with the idea of the map mentioned at the beginning of the *Berliner Chronik* is not a mere fancy, it becomes, as noted by Carol Jacobs, the epistemological operator of memory and the map the surface on which its writing is inscribed (Jacobs 1992):

Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always present [Darstellung] an autobiography (amount to an autobiography). And these quite certainly do not, even for the Berlin years that I am exclusively concerned with here. For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities. (Ivi, p. 28.)

In the above quotation the use of the expression *Darstellung* – representation, presentation, performance – indicates that Benjamin’s memory is structured *as if* it was a cartographic representation whose space contains different disconnected

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin, Walter. 1972. *Gesammelte Schriften*. VI. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. The English translation of *Berliner Chronik* is from the 1979 edition by Peter Demetz (1979: 5).

<sup>2</sup> As noted by Gunnar Olsson, an opening citation works as a launching pad for what will follow (Olsson: 1991), an anticipation, a framework for the subsequent discourse.

snapshots, deviations and digressions. The flat surface of the chart initiates the workings of memory. Through these (unusual) connections the act of remembering becomes connected with cartography and the affirmation of this act depends on a cartographic impulse. Benjamin writes:

Suddenly, and with compelling force, I was struck by the idea of drawing a diagram of my life, and knew at the same moment exactly how it was to be done. With a very simple question I interrogated my past life, and the answers were inscribed, as if of their accord, on a sheet of paper that I had with me. A year or two later, when I lost this sheet, I was inconsolable [...]. Now, however, reconstructing its outline in thought without directly reproducing it, I should, rather speak of a labyrinth. I am not concerned here with what is installed in the chamber at its enigmatic center, ego or fate, but all the more with the many entrances leading into the interior. These entrances I call primal acquaintances; each of them is a graphic symbol of my acquaintance with a person whom I met, not through other people, but through neighborhood [...]. Whether cross-connections are finally established between these systems also depends on the intertwinements of our path through life. This is what the sketch of my life revealed to me as it took shape before me on that Paris afternoon. Against the background of the city, the people who had surrounded me closed together to form a figure. (Ivi, pp. 30–32.)

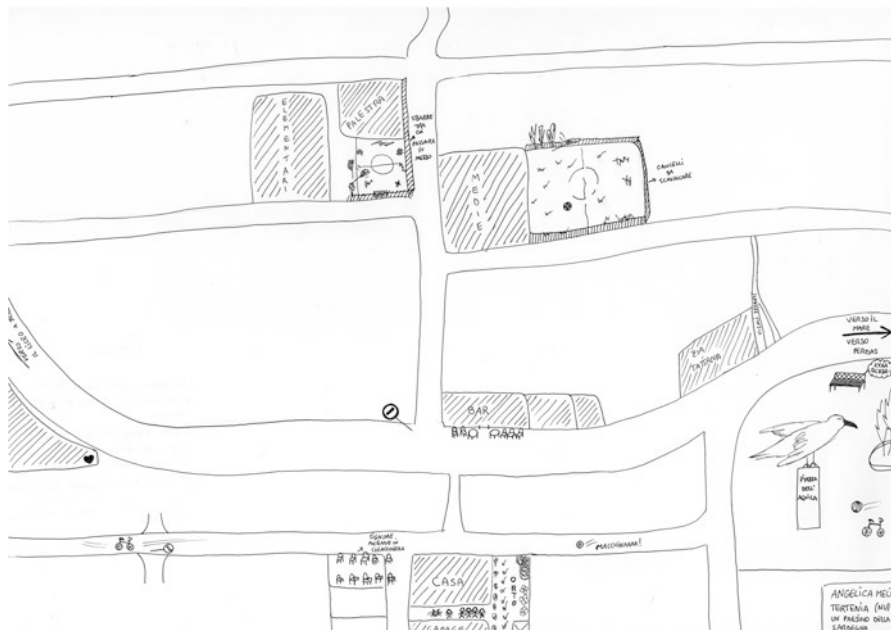
Benjamin's narration provides three points that are central in relation to the map we are going to analyze here. The first is the co-existence at the center of the diagram of one's life (and of all maps) of the *ego* (point of view) and *fate* (vanishing point); the second is that all memories of relations and events are anchored in space; the third is that the movement of memory implies the *montage* of a map that shows one's path through life (Schlögel 2003). And it is of little consequence whether the map has a geometric form as an abstract Euclidean surface or a personal labyrinth of places and directions. Whatever its form, all cartographic representation aims to "charter the world of thought and action", functioning as a "theatre on whose stage the absent is made present, the present made absent" (Olsson 2007: 57, 111). Or, in the words of Benjamin, acting as *geographer*: "language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theater. It is the medium of past experience" (Ivi, pp. 25–26). Whether we call it memory or map, to remember is an act of spatialization of time that fragments linear progression, and whose fragments *attract each other*, like *magnets*, here and now in the spatial synchrony of an eccentric plane.<sup>3</sup> It is only here and now that it is possible to fully understand the meaning of "the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand – like precious fragments or torsos in a collector's gallery – in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding".<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the contemporary theorization of the *spatial turn*,<sup>5</sup> Benjamin's geographic imagination in-between memory and routes already showed that topography

<sup>3</sup>For a geographic interpretation of Benjamin's work, see Derek Gregory (1994); Mike Savage (2000: 33–35).

<sup>4</sup>Walter Benjamin, cit. p 26.

<sup>5</sup>For an illustration of the idea of spatial turn, see Gaston Bachelard (1957), Michel Foucault (1966) Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977). The spatial turn has also played a key role in human sciences. See David Harvey (1989) and Edward Soja (1989, 1996).



**Fig. 1** A. M. place of origin's map

and biography, memories and maps are closely connected (though Benjamin's map deviates from social topography as it has the labyrinthine form of a *rhizome* with multiple entryways and exits, digressions and temporal scales<sup>6</sup>). As I have already argued, and in respect to the cartographic legitimacy of this rhizomatic form of detachment, the geographical lines traced by Benjamin function as guiding tools that intersect the lines traced by Pozzato in this volume that cross heterogeneous planes of places of origin.

The act of knowing also implies an act of re-cognition and, among the drawings collected in our corpus, the following, in particular its routes and title, has caught my attention (Fig. 1).

Our choice to take into consideration only one map in the *Atlas of Places of Origin* we have collected is inspired by Brian Harley's well-known theory according to which every cartographic representation should be seen as a text, an individual narration constructed through a system of signs (Harley 2001: 149–168).

Harley's conceptualisation of the map rejects the idea that the map is simply a mirror of the world, an objective graphic representation that uses a scale to provide a

<sup>6</sup>This definition provides an apt illustration of Benjamin's cartographic plan: "the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracing that must be put on the map, not the opposite": Deleuze, Gilles, Guattari, Félix. 1980. *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Tome 2, *Milles Plateaux*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit. English edition: 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum. p. 23.

truthful rendering of some elements of the Earth.<sup>7</sup> Following this line of reasoning, in our view, what a map really represents is a translation of the surface of the Earth on a table whose ordering principle is represented by the coordinates of social relations and cultural/political practices that together shape the world. Or, to put this slightly differently, as Franco Farinelli has stated, the map is the sum of relations that characterize human life according to priorities or preferences that are defined *ad-hoc* (Farinelli 2003: 6). In short, we are talking about models of mapmaking of the cultural and affective “invisible social world”, rather than a visible rendering of the surface of things. Harley’s point is that power prescribes cartographic rules that define a kind of realism and styles of truth that socially recognizable representations of the world should follow. Scale – which provides truth value – measures a maps’ position within the tautological oppositions objective/subjective, true/false. But, it should be pointed out that no map is technically authentic, as it is still not possible to transfer a curved space on a flat surface without producing deformations or losing the continuity of its form.<sup>8</sup> To return to Harley’s coordinates – which are not limited to the criticism of a mimetic kind of realism – each diagram of life of our Atlas can be included in the category of cartographic representation, as all of these are a projection on paper of invisible cultural relations and socio-spatial practices (Harley 1990), or, technically, of reversed perspectives, of a personal rhizome held together by memory’s logic.

## 2 Frame: “My Map”

Let us now consider A.M.’s map of Terténia drawn as response to our initial request to “draw a kind of map of your place of origin”. This request implies an initial triangulation of three elements: 1. the representation of the workings of memory; 2. the movement created by the act of memory; 3. the surveying of an idea that is called “place” and the implicit element of all maps – the so-called subject of the map. Had A. M. produced a cartographic representation according to modern projective geometry, the form of the subject of the map would have been a disembodied geometrical point of view and its projection would have conformed to the vanishing point on a Euclidean plane. The result would have been a geometrical selection of a series of elements of the territory that the author deemed significant, placed in a homogeneous and isotropic tabular space. However, in this map the triangulation contains a movement (the act of remembering) that re-defines the position and nature of the map (the subject) and therefore also the structure and content (place) of the map itself. According to Edward Casey “*The memory of the World* is very

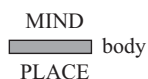
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<sup>7</sup>We privilege the work of Brian Harley because, along with Denis Wood, he is the founder of the History of cartography. See Harley and David (1987)

<sup>8</sup>As Pavel Florenskij has noted: “There is simply no way that an eggshell, or even a fragment of it, can be laid over the surface of a marble table. To do so one would need to obliterate its form by grinding it into the finest powder. For the same reason it is impossible to represent an egg, in any exact sense of the word, on paper or canvas”. This quotation is taken from the English translation of Florenskij’s study (1919) edited by Nicoletta Misler (2000: 159).

much the memory of being bodily in the world, being a central memorial presence there” (Casey 2000: 180). The body as lived and remembered is a locus that *mind* and *place* traverse in order to meet, it is what remains between two dimensions and it resembles a thick interstitial border line: “it not only takes me into places; it habituates me to their peculiarities and helps me to remember them vividly.” (Casey 2000: 180).

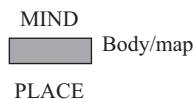
This is how we could represent this relation:



Hence the relation between memory and place can be understood only indirectly, that is to say through the translation/mediation of the *body as lived and remembered*. The embodiment of remembering implies a particular perspective and position. To put this in Casey’s words “it is to have not just a point of view but a place in which we are situated” (Casey 2000: 182). From this position and with such a body it is possible through memory to recall the image of experiences and facts that took *place* in a specific *place of origin*; it is possible make a (memory) map (Norment 2012:10) that spontaneously selects and coordinates what is worth remembering, leaving a void for what can be forgotten. On the intrinsic possibility of places to evoke and keep memories alive, Casey has written:

places are *congealed scenes* for remembered contents; and as such they serve to situate what we remember. Here we encounter once more place’s *periechon* being, its containing/surrounding function. Place is a *mise en scène* for remembered events precisely to the extent that it guards and keeps these events within its self-delimiting perimeters. Instead of filtering out (as a place can do for inappropriate, ill-placed memories), place holds in by giving to memories an authentically local habitation: by being their place-holder (ivi: 186).

From places’ originary power to keep and evoke memories, Casey postulates a structural analogy between place and memory based on the fact that both provide an intelligible form to depict distant and different positions and events: in the same way in which place keeps together heterogeneous objects and positions, so memory gathers in a coherent narration different moments that occurred at different times in the past. In this way, Casey seems to say that any act of imagining in the past has essentially a cartographic nature. Given this premise, it follows that maps are geographic imaginings whose center is a subject defined body as lived and remembered, a *mise en scène*, materially *congealed* of the place in which this body has lived. To the scheme represented above, one should therefore add at least another term and make the interstitial line thicker as shown below:



This is a local translation of what Olsson calls simply map, or sign. In the interstitial space between MIND and PLACE, geographical imagination “forms as a





The frame of the map is technically structured according to the *remembering-that* principle, characterized by the predominant representation of qualitative connoted situations. These are not constructed by the juxtaposition of elements, but by their correlation and interaction, establishing in this way an internal articulation that refers to a “quasi-narrative” structure (Casey 2000: 54). The result is a skeleton-like structure of a situation in its bare “thatness” that in this case traces spatial practices and pathways. This frame contains two main factors: the Heideggerian “worldhood” and the “self-presence of the rememberer”. The first is made up of “scenes” – the exact where in which the action unfolds (gates, alleyways, courtyards, streets, small chairs) – and of “surroundings” – the immediate vicinity of this scene that, following Casey, stands out because of its emptiness. This emptiness is clearly expressed by the white cartographic space. The second factor logically intersects with the first, as “where there is such worldhood within the memory-frame, the self-presence of the rememberer may become a noticeable component of the object phase of remembering” (Casey 2000: 69).

A. M.’s map provides an example of an ordered plot that is sustained by the systematic and precise to and fro between remembering and the cartographic impulse, between a coherent spatial architecture and heterogeneous temporal scales. A *mise en scène* of the *art of memory* and the *art of geography* coordinated within the same frame.

The prerequisite and object of this *Darstellung* occupy the most important place in the lower part of the map, as place-holder of the map’s structure (a sort of “I am here”) (Vaughan 2010: 93). A. M. places his/her house exactly at the centre of the line that coincides with the lower margin of the page and the threshold of the map itself (the garage and part of the vegetable patch are partially outside the map). Opposite the house are the only figures of the map: A.M., A.M.’s family (including the cat). This represents the topological “where” that technically provides the direction of the map, and orients all subsequent spatial practices – a geographic originary point for all pathways. In the corner on the right, the spot that seems to indicate the end of the narration is a rectangle that contains the anagraphic and topographic indication for the map: A.M. and Terténia respectively. This is a concise identification document, that in maps is technically called cartouche (from the Latin *charta*). In this small chart/document, the space that separates the name and surname of the author of the map (personal proper name) and the toponym (name of the geographic place that is defined as “a small village in Sardinia”) is compressed and continuous, at least if we consider cartouche as a text. No punctuation separates the two *as if* they together were a sort of signature. Even in this very personal diagram of life, the cartographic triangulation – the unfinished process that is essentially dynamic and temporal – requires a close contiguity of biography, topography and place of origin. As A.M. said after she had made the drawing: “what really has *made* me what I am was this village”. Its map as far as points, orientation and coordinates are concerned is similar to the categories of the “embodied map” as theorized by the most radical branch of feminist geography.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Elizabeth Grosz (1995), Matthew Sparke (1998), Massey (1994).

### 3 Geographical Pathways

Let us now consider the rhizome of places of origin through geographical terminology, that is to say the signs and the structure of A.M.'s map beginning from its geographical determinations. The first thing to note is the orientation of the map, that is to say those fixed points that anchor the invisible coordinations of the space of the representation. Terténia's map does not aim at communicating geographical *information* but, as already noted, at finding nodes and pathways of childhood memories that are staged in a geographical *setting*. From a cartographical point of view, this map is oriented so that the north is placed on its upper part. Eastwards we find an exact notation that says "towards the sea, towards Perdas" and westward "towards the Jerzu liceo". The point that coordinates the unfolding of memory is in the lower part of the map, that geographically corresponds to the south, where the drawing of the house and the family group appears. It is precisely this landmark that orients A.M.'s social and individual life, whose symbolic significance transforms it into the fixed point of the representation – the point that determines meaning.

This is the space on the map where the existential coordinates of the subject (remembered lived body) and the abstract ones, that define the totality of geographic space and make this map technically "cognitive", come together. The co-existence of both categories could be explained with the double dimension (spatial/ temporal and biographic/topographic) of A.M.'s diagram; or its logical and functional contiguity to that model that geographers have defined *map* (Harvey 1991), that is to say what in the medieval period was designated as "the blanket of the world" (Farinelli 2009: 20–21) whose meaning exceeds conventional ideas of mapping, and that ever since the beginning of the 1970s have been redefined as cognitive or mental maps (Tuan 1975; Gould and White 1974, Wood 1990). All these definitions are but ambiguous labels; what remains true though is that in order to begin to understand how a map functions one should

approach it as a palimpsest, a parchment written on twice, the first text erased, the second covering the traces of the old. Since its rhetorical force depends on the internal coherence of the narrative, and since the spiritual world is always emphasized over the physical, the pictured scenes are positioned to fit the temporal logic of the story rather than the realities of geographical space (Olsson 2007: 57).

Accordingly here we will attempt to consider both aspects of the map: the topographic aspect and the topological narration. As we have already considered the fixed points of the coordinates of A.M.'s map, now we have to consider their unfolding.

With reference to Kevin Lynch's well known categories of the *form* of the city (Lynch 1960), A.M.'s map can be defined as a "cognitive map" because of its exact correlation with geographical space. Moreover, this map shows a precise use of all the five elements that, according to Lynch, provide the degree of imageability of a map in relation to the form of a city:

1. "paths" (the map is structured around the intertwining of roads and pathways);

2. “edges” (the lower and upper edges provide a sort of spatial and existential gap beyond which all is invisible, all movement stops and memory is erased);
3. “districts” (that can be referred to the various functions and uses of the places in Terténia: schools, public gardens, space for spare time, the social space of casual conversations and the convivial space in which adults meet);
4. “nodes” (gates, nets and secret alleyways);
5. “landmarks”(the family home and the home of aunt Tatiana).

All in all it provides a good survey between memory and experience of the intricate details of the A.M.’s diagram that refer both to spatial practices and social nodes. It is a map that communicates a strong sense of place and belonging, because the relationship between the subject and the spatial structure of Terténia is never alienating.

As regards dimensions, in maps the dimension of symbols is directly related to meanings and memories. In this map roads take up space; therefore, from a formal point of view and according to a cartographical analysis informed by *topography* and *topology*, A.M.’s map is readable and plausible. From a technical point of view, it appears vividly comprehensible in that it expresses the above mentioned intrinsic meanings. However, differently from Lynch maps, this has no use. This is not an attempt to either recall Terténia space to measure its imageability, or to establish whether the mental map recalled helps A.M. to find her way here and now. As regards logic, we are far away from the purpose of the environmental image according to Lynch: a generalised image that is the product of the intertwining of memory and present sensations that has the instrumental function to interpret information and guide others. No map of the place of origin serves to orient oneself in the present, as this supports memory and serves to re-present the past from a “here and now” position. This kind of map does not point to a direction to take, but shows the way that took us to where we are now. It is a *a-posteriori* narration of events and as such the analogy of cartographical form, meaning and function does not always work.

Memory, map and place and their dynamic triangulation seem to take another and further direction that leads towards a specific line whose meaning is revealed when the map is viewed from the point of view of the so-called “local mind” (La Cecla 2000). From this viewpoint, the clear totality of pathways and itineraries begins “to take space”, as this totality graphically interrupts the indistinct white and decidedly leads towards places filled with memories. From a topological point of view it is precisely these pathways and itineraries that are “voiced”; these constitute and organize the skeleton of memory: the unfolding on the archive of our steps. In other words, the map synchronically stages that dynamic process of systematic appropriation of space that can be realized through the progressive distancing from the area of the house. From the safety of lower margin of the map, we can imagine a movement towards the outside that step after step moves towards the attainment of a full geographical orientation. Furthermore, we can foresee the development of a self-consciousness/ knowledge that allows A.M. to move freely without getting lost. This topology narrates the process of “growing up” through an appropriation of space that offers protection against the “dramatic consequences of getting lost”. In

this map, we can see our subject able to orient herself without a guide through the snares of closed gates and the enclosed courtyard of the school, through the maze of closed alleyways transformed into secret labyrinths (La Cecla 2000: 15–16).

There are at least two conclusions to be drawn. The first concerns the position of the subject in relation to the motion of memory, the second refers the meaning of this relation in respect of the meaning and the function of the form of the map. The following passage by Fredric Jameson is enlightening:

Yet Lynch's work also suggests a further line of development insofar as cartography itself constitutes its key mediatory instance. A return to the history of this science (which is also an art) shows us that Lynch's model does not yet, in fact, really correspond to what will become mapmaking. Lynch's subjects are rather clearly involved in pre-cartographic operations whose results traditionally are described as itineraries rather than as maps: diagrams organized around the still subject-centered or existential journey of the traveler, along which various significant key features are marked: oases, mountain ranges, rivers, monuments, and the like. The most highly developed form of such diagrams is the nautical itinerary, the sea chart, or *portulans*, where coastal features are noted for the use of Mediterranean navigators who rarely venture out into the open sea. (Jameson 1991: 51–52)

On the threshold of modernity, the diagram of the nautical itinerary in the form of *portulans* implies a new practice that involves the compilation of the captain's log-book on whose flat surface the captain of the boat every day transcribes the act of sea travelling – the art of piloting a boat – where the most important rule is to keep sight of the coastline (Livingstone 1992: 36–41). Nautical charts and diaries consist of a complete recording of exploration that will be read only at the end of the journey, this very recording is also used by explorers on land. Jameson's brief cartographic reflections are organized around a chronological principle and refer to the different dimensions that space has taken in history. What Jameson calls pre-cartographic practice – tracing a linear itinerary of pathways whose form cannot be reduced to a map in the totality of space – provides an apt comparison with the internal mechanism that regulates projection, structure and the functioning of all maps of the place of origin. As a matter of fact, this mechanism presupposes the need for a caesura whose recomposition depends on the presence of a mnemonic trace of the itinerary. Memory retraces the footsteps of this itinerary, recomposing a coherent and full rhizome of the place of origin. This itinerary recalls the emblematic line that measures the double distance between the present of A.M.'s position and the past of her place of origin, the same line that each geographical imagination must overcome.

Pre-cartography should not be understood as an operation that comes before, but as providing an indication for a return movement that begins with the archive of all the steps made by A.M. For this reason, it is strategic to intertwine the temporal and the spatial dimension, the plane of memory and that of its recording, because it is precisely in this complex encounter between metaphor and metonymy that the double nature and position of the subject can be found. Self-estrangement is the term used by Jonathan Flatley to mean the distance that would allow one to observe oneself from outside. This term also implies a separation that makes the structure of

feeling unexpected and surprising, paving the way for a new kind of observation analysis (Flatley 2008). The dimension studied by Flatley is in this case central:

“Affective mapping” is the name I am giving to the aesthetic technology – in the older, more basic sense of a *techne* – that represents the historicity of one’s affective experience. (Flatley 2008: 4)

I mean “mapping” here, I should emphasize, in a slightly unexpected manner. That is, the affective map is not a stable representation of a more or less unchanging landscape; [...] I mean the term to suggest something essentially revisable; when it works, it is a technology for the representation to oneself of one’s own historically conditioned and changing affective life. [...] The revisable, rhizomatic affective map not only gives us a view of a terrain shared with others in the present but also traces the paths, resting places, dead ends, and detours we might share with those who came before us (Flatley 2008: 7)

Hence, an affective map that points to the feeling of being at home. Let us then begin to move in the direction of the dynamic aspect of this place of origin, along the line of its development, re-tracing that movement backwards that all acts of remembering imply.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4 Writing Geographical Memory: Exploration and Itinerary

Let us consider the following fragment from the introduction of *Geography and Memory. Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming* that describes the aims of this volume:

It remains one of the greatest unknown lands for science to explore: that of the detailed working of the brain and questions of consciousness in relation to unconsciousness, emotions, affect and memory. [...] We feel that geography, and related disciplines, have their role to play in this venture, and that exploring the process and implications of memory and geography is a demanding and exciting venture. This book walks with that challenge and seeks to map the relationships between geography and memory along three critical pathways: identity, place and becoming. (Jones, Garde-Hansen 2012: 1)

Let us consider also the famous title of David Lowenthal’s study *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) along with its exotic cover image and several examples of time travellers. These two volumes, along with an image and a crowd of the most diverse travellers would suffice to demonstrate that the metaphor of the journey and of the exploration of a strange territory and/or a *terra incognita* is the most common metaphor for the relationship between memory and space. The metaphorical entanglement with a traditional geographical practice is charged with meaning and exceeds the well known connection between places and the act of remembering. We think that it is the signifier that stands for the recognition of the geographical primacy of the recording technique, as well as the data collection (the signified).

As is well known, geographical technique is nothing but the elaboration of a network that produces a “logical image” of the world so that lands that have been

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<sup>11</sup> See Bingham and Thrift (2000).

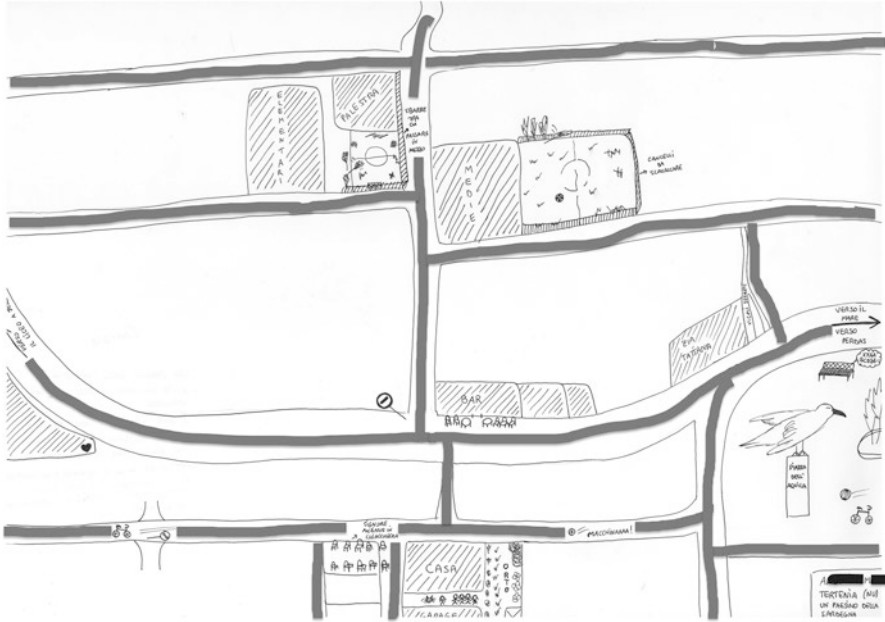


Fig. 3 The itineraries of “My map”

explored are not forgotten. This is more similar to a mnemonic technique than a description. From this point of view the chart functions as requirement for discovery and starts that recurrent and asymmetric process of accumulation of knowledge that has characterized the unfolding of modernity (Sloterdijk: 2005). As Bruno Latour has noted, the chart is the most efficient mobile technology to record, preserve and reproduce all fragments of explored lands (Latour 1989: 357). However, exploration (practice), *terra incognita* (object), map (quasi-narrative re-presentation) should be seen as three moments in a dynamic process that logically and functionally comes after the ordinary act of discovery: to walk through unexpected *critical pathways*; in other words that “research for” that begins through what Casey describes as “insertion into place by means of the body” (Casey 2000: 191). Precisely because the development of A.M.’s map is about pathways of place (*periechon*) of origin, it is necessary to return to the ordinary model of the *periplo* or the *períodos* in order to define the space that originates the map, while to understand its sense – that is to identify that relationship between exploring and mapping necessary for geographical imagination – it is necessary to reflect on the practice of modern exploration (Fig. 3).

A.M.’s map can be defined as a bidimensional result of a trajectory of what Pietro Janni defines hodologic space, that space that depends on the linear dimension of movement, whose logic is opposed to the heterogeneous relation among points, roads and places that can be found on a map (Janni: 1984). Exemplary of hodologic space are the *períodos* of Strabo’s *Geography*. For Strabo the order of geographical

discourse depends on the order of appearance of places in relation to the movement of the geographer. Moreover, this space presupposes the systematic absence of charts and is unusual for its “curious dynamic elements” in which localities are described as if they could move or take a certain direction. What Janni sees as substantive in these kind of maps is the way the description of movement is founded on a rigorously uni-dimensional language characterized by recurrent formulas that recall those of the *peripli*. As in Strabo’s *Geography*, the geographer’s task is to find a guiding principle to put order into the inarticulate mass of Earth forms, so that these can acquire an intelligible form – a guiding principle that also functions as an *aide memoire*. What are the characteristics of the dynamic line that provides order in the narration and the practice of geographical space?

A first necessary consideration is that whoever lists a series of places in order of appearance does so by starting from his/her own personal knowledge and placing him/herself as the exclusive reference point; consequently listing places starting from his/her own interests and actions. It follows that:

1. the direction “of point B in relation to point A is not the straight line that connects A and B [...] rather it is the direction that who is in A must follow to get to B in the easiest, most comfortable way”;
2. the shortest way “is not a segment of the line [...] rather the line that marks the quickest way for the most frequently used, or safest, or most comfortable means of transport, in short the most *economic* way in its broadest sense”;
3. the distance between two points “is measured by the number of steps necessary to go from one to the other, and by the total effort necessary [...] moreover the distance AB is not necessarily equal to the distance BA”;
4. “hodologic space knows points that have heightened value and meaning and that contribute to its structure and introduce marked dissymmetries”;
5. orientation always depends on the starting point that “look” in the direction X (Janni 1984: 84).

These five characteristics – all of them present in A.M.’s map – lead to the following conclusion: knowledge of geographical space as a whole is something that does not concern journeying, or better the measure of this knowledge depends on the number of paths that we actively manage to find and follow. It is therefore necessary for a certain period of time to elapse to manage to reconstruct the totality of our itineraries and endow them with a form through mapmaking. Hence the bidimensional medium of the map “triumphs over the three-dimensional, and *ipso facto* the image over the body” (Sloterdijk 2005: 98) giving up its active role in the production of knowledge. It is also important to point out that the temporal difference is necessary to recognize the value of what we encounter on our path. The movement implied in the act of drawing depends on the movement of thought to recall (here and now) the steps we took (then) in space (elsewhere). The dynamic nature of the itinerary of the places translated on the map is evoked by the temporal difference that is at the basis of all mapmaking, that is to say making present and recalling through the imagination practices that are temporally distant. As noted by Benjamin, we can dream the moment of learning to write, but we cannot perform that any longer. What is crucial

in this reflection is above all the irreversibility of the loss of the bodily dimension and the “discovery”, and it is precisely this that is connected with the impulse to actively unveil *terra incognita* by way of a line.

Paul Carter considers the practices that produce discovery. According to him, the crucial moment of these practices is represented by the translation of “explorer narratives” in “Spatial History”:

The explorer journals describe the country in its pre-mapped state: but this state is soon superseded not only by the explorers’ own draft charts, but by later travelers linking up their routes to other routes. Before long the one-sidedness of the first journey has been replaced by the ubiquitous view of the map (Carter 1992 :9).

Different lines (routes) come together and isolated narrations are transformed into a complete image, which enables relations and intersections that would otherwise be invisible. Besides the reduction of heterogeneous local stories into a unifying Spatial History, what is crucial here is Carter’s musings on the systematic absence of maps during explorations. Carter refers in particular to the absence of photographs. These are defined as a positive image and, for this reason similar to cartography due to their common logic and manipulatory power. In relation to the geographical debate about explorers’ resistance to the techniques of the photographic image, Carter has suggested that this can be explained by the pre-visual nature of the explorers’ experience, and in particular the difference between the photographer/cartographer’s gaze and that of the explorer/narrator:

Dealing in perfect reproductions, in repeatable events, photography shared the outlook of the scientific geographer with his map: it assumed the reality of the journey lay in the facts it established, the landmarks, the track, the permanent features in their permanent, static relations. Yet exploration by its very nature occupied a pre-visual realm, one in which directions remained to be defined, journeys were one-way and lookouts (the *sine qua non* of picturesque touring) had still to be found (Carter 1992: 35)

What is suggested here is that the cartographer behaves like someone who travels with a map and from time to time compares the reality of space and its cartographical re-presentation. In this way, he forgets that the way the journey unfolds depends on the explorer’s personal experience and his/her choices concerning the route, denomination of the places he travels through, where to camp, or, more simply, experiences that distract him. On the contrary, the gaze of the explorer determines territorial markers and emergency points in order to structure and provide meaning and congruity to the explored space. In short, this difference between explorer and cartographer depends foremost on a direction: the explorer proceeds step by step outwards because his/her route is yet to be fully formed. Carter adds, with reference to the process of constructing reality, “exploration, [...] was precisely what photography could not visualize” (Carter 1992: 36).

Notwithstanding the faithfulness and efficacy of the cartographic/photographic document, according to Carter, what criticism fails to come to terms with is that a photograph (or a map) transforms reality into a Spatial History only *a posteriori*, through a sort of *post-journey*, because it is only in the dimension of the *post* that, for example, the promontory that the explorer passes through during his journey can



be represented on the map, following a process of re-cognition. The promontory is transformed into an artefact with new characteristics and ready to partake of a new context of meaning that re-designs its nature and function. It is at this point, when the promontory becomes an image, that technically it has been discovered. Because explorers act in a pre-visual environment, they become cartographers only on their return journey, when they remember the camping site or a certain promontory that are transformed in artefacts through a process of *re-calling*. In other words, the map is realized when the explorers' footsteps acquire a privileged meaning, marking an itinerary that previously was a disorienting and indifferent locus of possibilities (Carter 1992: 45). In this way, the protruding rock with a bizarre shape where the previous season the explorer camped is transformed into a familiar place; a group of acacia trees resembling a skeleton at the bifurcation of a valley marks the place where a difficult choice had been taken, the remainders of a camping site are transformed into a place of encounters. It is at the end of the journey that explorers realize that all these events have acquired an *iconic* meaning and are ready to be drawn and named on a map. And yet, no translation is possible without the narrative memory recorded on the journey. No map is possible without the periplo that structures the diagram of experience. In conclusion, the world drawn on the map is exclusively the world re-cognized on the return journey, when events experienced during the journey are transformed into an oriented image and places come to light – re-represent themselves – through the act of denomination. Maps record all that explorers are leaving behind and can materialize only when they look back to see the effect produced by their own movement, much like Timothy O'Sullivan and his footsteps in the Nevada desert.<sup>12</sup>

If we transpose this short digression to the case of the map we are analyzing, we can immediately retrace A.M.'s movement and see that this is akin to practices of exploration and discovery. A.M. also can map her origin as soon as itineraries are complete and places have been walked through. In this way, from this vantage point, the actions of trespass and entering a place without being seen find their place on the map along with gates and fences; the act of chatting is represented by empty little chairs, football games and friendships mark a particular stretch of street.

A.M.'s map recalls the logic of the *post journey* – and more in general of exploration and surveying – also in relation to what geographers call “domestication” or dis-distancing to mean a process of appropriation that begins by assigning names, or re-assigning names to what already has a name. This process causes a practical, material manipulation and/or a change in the use of an element (does the rock protrusion prove to be a good shelter? Then it is with this function in mind that it will be re-named so that it can be used again as a sheltering place) (Sloterdijk 2005, Gregory 1994). As regards the cartographical aspect, this produces a legitimized legal appropriation of the place, as regards the emotive one, this produces familiarity with the place, so that the latter is perceived as safer and domesticated in the deepest sense of this term. *Geographical imagination* begins right here: between

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<sup>12</sup>The reference here is to the famous image made by O'Sullivan during the so-called King Survey for the geological exploration of the fortieth parallel. [in bibliography]



As psycho-physical in status, the lived body puts us in touch with the psychical aspects of remembering and the physical features of place. As itself movable and moving, it can relate at once to the movable bodies that are the primary occupants of place and to the self-moving soul that recollects itself in place. Above all, through its active intentional arc, the lived body traces out the arena for the remembered scenes that inhere so steadfastly in particular places: the body's maneuvers and movements, imagined as actual, make room for remembering placed scenes in all of their complex composition. (Casey 2000: 189)

The relation that connects body place and memory encompasses also the consideration of the orientation and direction that the body assigns to places (North/South, right/left), as well as the capacity of this body to measure spatio-temporal distances. According to Casey, the very same capacities, but of an exploratory nature, constitute the condition to “be *familiar* with a particular place *in* which we are located”. I use the term *act* because, as will become clear, “to be familiar” does not merely imply feeling at home, rather it presupposes some form of appropriation of the place itself:

feeling at ease in a place that has become *one's own* in some especially significant way. “One's own” does not imply possession in any literal sense; it is more deeply a question of *appropriating*, with all that this connotes of *making something one's own* by *making it one with one's ongoing life*. The appropriation of familiar places is accomplished by the lived body, which has “a knowledge bred of familiarity that does not give us a position in objective space”. (Casey 2000: 191–192)

The penultimate movement to conclude the final *step* regarding the so-called distancing: “such work of the customary body is domesticating in function; it forges a sense of attuned space that allows one to feel *chez soi* in an initially unfamiliar place” (Casey 2000: 193), a place about which it is then possible to write a Local History. Further, the recall to memory of the experiences lived in places implies to *desire* to return to that place, “whether by memory or in some other way”; for example through a map, the geographical imagination that travels through the *line of desire* aims at possession (Farinelli 1992: 3). To return to A.M.'s map, the process of manipulation prior to the surveying of Terténia as a place of origin is evident. Given this we can proceed with a last act of imagination and see A.M. actively exploring and going through all the itineraries within the space of the village, journeying from her home to school, leaping over gates, exploring alleys; speeding on her bike, listening to old ladies *a convegno* [chatting] and playing with a ball in the park. Routes, intersections, buildings do not need to be named because they are made there, present; they belong to A.M. as points to mark out places. What appears on this map of routes – one that marks the lively rhizome of memory evoking voices and games long past – is the very personal signs of the explorer that inscribes itself in place of the existing toponymy of Terténia. No official indication of the names of streets appear on A.M.'s map. Signs say on the other hand: home, school, park, gates, secret alleys, etc. For each of these signs the possessive adjective “my” is implicit, made redundant by the renomination procedure. It explicitly says that is truly and deeply “My map”.

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# Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis

Giulia Mazzeo

**Abstract** From a psychological point of view asking a person to draw and comment about one's place of origin means to activate a complex narrative re-elaboration that involves cognitive, emotional and relational processes. One's home, neighbourhood and native place represent a peculiar geographical places closely connected with the individual's first significant social relationships. As noted in attachment theory and post-rationalist cognitive approaches, repeated interactions with caregivers play a central role in the way individuals function on an emotional, cognitive and socio-relational level. The graphic representations and conversational analyses of such maps and their descriptions show that to draw and narrate one's place of origin means to think and re-evoke scenes and relational moments that have contributed to the formation and maintenance of consistent, stable and temporally continuous sense of self. Maps of childhood places therefore could be seen as maps of self, that is to say maps of relational events that have led to the strengthening of specific relational and organizational modalities. From this point of view, the main focus of this study – the drawing of and commenting on one's place of origin – constitutes an interesting way to analyse and share personal history and individual functioning, but also a way to re-represent and re-narrate one's personal story, one's relations and self within a relational frame.

## 1 Introduction

The analysis of graphic representations of places of origin undoubtedly represents an interesting case study in psychology. In a period characterized by continuous processes of migration, to begin to reflect on one's spatial and territorial dimension – particularly when connected with an individual's early years – implies a discourse on personal identity. As this study is connected with a complex contemporary context, we will begin by asking some key questions: “what are we analyzing?” “How do we do it?” “How can psychology use the material we have collected and provide ways to interpret it?”

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Given these initial questions, our study will begin from a conceptual re-definition of the object of this study in order to define its theoretical framework. It will continue with the illustration of the above interpretative methodologies. Exemplifications of our method will focus on analyses of some of the maps included in our corpus. This chapter will end with some reflections on possible ways to use this kind of analysis for psychological studies.

## **2 Representations, Places and Origins**

The representation of one's place of origin through maps is a complex issue for contemporary psychology because it involves at least three areas of its research:

1. Cognitive psychology that enables an understanding of the representative processes illustrating its modes of formation, maintenance and recovery.
2. Environmental psychology that enables reflection on the idea of place and its implications for identity.
3. Clinical psychology that contributes a clarification of the relevance and personal significance that places of origin and their representation can have on the individual structure of knowledge.

To analyze representations of places of origin means to reflect on representative, social-relational and identificatory processes. It is necessary therefore to find a theoretical framework that refers to different aspects of psychology and connects together all the variables that are at stake.

### ***2.1 Cognitive Psychology and Mental Representation***

Cognitive psychology sees the human mind as processing incoming sensory information and outgoing behavioural responses. As noted by Neisser (1967), any form of knowledge or representation of reality depends not only on the mediating action of sensory organs, but also of complex cognitive systems. Sensory information in fact has to go through several elaboration stages and it is translated into a stable mental representation that can be re-evoked.

First of all, the sensory input must be recorded and translated into a nervous signal by sensory organs. One's sensory system has some intrinsic limitations; all human beings can register external reality only through a rather limited sensory window. Therefore there is always a difference between the physical stimulus and the sensory stimulus, in the same way there is always a difference between objective-physical reality and subjective-sensory reality.

At a later stage, the information has to be organized into a complex perceptive experience, one through which the external world is made sense of and background objects are made to come to the fore. Perceptive processes are based on principles of economy and simplicity. These principles prevent a cognitive overcharge that would be caused by the huge quantities of stimuli we have to face every day, how-

ever, these principles also risk causing perceptive biases, similar to those caused by optical illusions. The final perception is therefore the result of active processes of reconstruction and re-organization that can easily lead to an altered and distorted vision of the external world.

Perceptions have therefore to be memorized, so that they can be stored and, if necessary, recovered. According to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) memory can be conceived as a storage system. Only when perceptual information has reached long-term memory can it be re-codified in a representation with meaning that can be stored for most of one's life. In moving from one storage place to another, it is however possible that a partial, or total loss of information occurs. For reasons of economy, selective attention intervenes, which selects only information that is deemed relevant for the needs and aims of the individual. Bartlett (1932) also notes that memory is mostly an active and reconstructive process as individuals use schemes to select and re-organize the mnemonic material. Memorized information can therefore be considered as an imaginative construction, which is almost an unfaithful representation of reality.

Cognitive psychology has also studied the particular kind of format in which external data is memorized. Mental representations can internally reproduce sensory data, even when these are not directly present to the observer. According to the theory of the double codification by Paivio (1971, 1986) – also confirmed by experimental research – each individual can use two representative modalities in relation to specific cognitive performances. Propositions are abstract descriptions similar to natural language, and for this reason they are the elective modality to represent verbal information. Mental images are analogous to our sensory perception, and are therefore more suitable for non-verbal information. These two symbolic systems represent reality as independent and yet interconnected. Each reality datum can be represented in two different codifications and representative modalities. And yet, while it is always possible to describe non-verbal elements at a non-propositional level, not all verbal data (and particularly abstract concepts) can be codified on an imaginative level. Therefore all information that can be stored according to a double codification strategy (both analogical and propositional) will be more memorisable and easily remembered.

Mental representation stabilised in memory represents therefore a partial and original reconstruction of reality that can be remembered later. And yet, memories are subjected to interferences that can lead to a lack of retrieval or a distorted re-evocation. The possibility to recall a memory depends on the emotional salience and on the frequency with which this is recalled. Emotional salience can favour the retrieval of a mnemonic datum, but it can also contribute to alter or block access to it. The reliability of a recollection also depends on other factors. Studies on the reliability of eyewitness testimony have shown that memories can be contaminated by secondary information temporally antecedent or successive to the memory (Furnham et al. 2002; Loftus 1977). In extreme cases this kind of interference can lead to the creation of false memories (Kassin e Kiechel 1996), especially when there is social pressure (Hyman et al. 1995). Also central is the similarity between memorizing and recovery techniques; the cognitive interview used in court to question eyewitness is based on this aspect (Fisher et al. 1987; Fisher e Geiselman 1992). The more



marked the temporal distance between the event and its memory, the higher the discrepancy between the strategies used during the memorizing and recovery phases. The natural historical evolution of individuals inevitably leads to the adoption of a different perspective, that is the result of the individual's past experience. Hence to remember means to further re-elaborate the past in the light of the present.

The processes of mental elaboration of information according to cognitive psychology can be used for a preliminary re-reading of the object of our study.

Maps of one's place of origin can be re-defined as graphic transpositions of childhood mental representations. Therefore their analysis must take into consideration some of the characteristics of mental representations they derive from as well as the elaboration processes they involve. Mental representations of one's place of origin must be intended as an approximate and re-constructive reproduction of reality. Further, *after memories* are the result of a re-reading influenced by new life experiences and the way these interact with the past. From a psychological point of view, the undeniable fact that there is only a limited correspondence between a mental map and geographical map is also insignificant for the purpose of our analysis. What is important is not so much the similarities between them, as the fact that graphic representations are indicative of internal representations that are created and re-created by the subject.

Places of origin as reality data endowed with a concrete nature can be represented through a double codification strategy, both propositional and analogical. Hence a richer and more complete psychological knowledge of this kind of representation can be attained through a double-fold analysis that considers both verbal and non-verbal information.

## 2.2 *Environment Psychology and Places*

Environmental psychology studies the relationship between people and their environment; it considers reciprocal influences and the physical and social dimension of life spaces. More specifically, since Canter's studies (1977), attention has been concentrated on places, intended as spatial unities filled with meaning and characterized by physical and social characteristics. In this way it has been possible to discover the emotional and identity values of specific environment.

The study of emotional connections with places is based on the recognition that individuals build affective relations with their environment, in particular those in which they have spent most of their lives or relevant phases of them. Hidalgo and Hernández (2001) use the idea of place attachment to refer to the positive affective relation between individual and a specific place, relation which according to these scholars is characterized by a search for proximity. Place attachment, despite showing analogies with the concept developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) to describe the relation child-caregiver, shares with this only some of its characteristics of uniqueness, permanence and security. Indeed individuals can develop this kind of

relationship with more than one place at the same time and only those that are more strongly connected with personal identity are irreplaceable. The lack of proximity – due to people temporarily moving away or leaving their place of origin for good – is not always experienced negatively. Moreover, the feeling of being safe in connection to place attachment is mostly associated with one's home.

The idea of place attachment is particularly interesting in the light of contemporary migration patterns. Ever since Fried (1963), it has been demonstrated that the attachment with place becomes relevant and raised to conscious attention primarily when people are forced to leave a place due to external circumstances. In these cases the interruption of the relationship to a place can be associated with intense unease and disruption of personal identity because of the disappearance of a sense of spatial, temporal and social identity. And yet, Feldman (1996) has demonstrated that personal consequences are not so negative if leaving the place is the result of voluntary decisions connected with a change of the individual's needs. In these cases, spurred by expected positive changes, the individual is able to adaptively re-orient and quickly develop new affective connections toward a new place. Place attachment is particularly salient during childhood and old age, two periods during which the individual is particularly vulnerable from a physical and psychological point of view. Children, due to their limited motor and explorative abilities fear unknown places and have a tendency to form a relationship with familiar places where they feel safe. Old people, because of limited physical and social autonomy as well as memories connected with their environment, see lived places as powerful identity references.

Hildago and Hernández (2001) have demonstrated that attachment is stronger towards one's home and city than towards one's neighbourhood. Moreover, social features of places are more important than physical ones. Therefore emotions experienced in places are mainly the expression of the attachment with people that live or have lived in those places. Place attachment has been studied largely in terms of its positive valences, but it is plausible to posit that the kind of emotion associated with places is more complex and also includes negative emotions (Giuliani and Feldman 1993).

Place attachment is a way to explain not only the importance of places for emotions, but also its identity values. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996), who have employed the idea of place identity (Proshansky et al. 1983), consider places as influencing one's sense of identity precisely because of the connection between the latter and the individual. In an empirical study in a London neighbourhood, they showed that places represent an identity reference point that people use to orient themselves in the temporal and spatial dimension of their existence and maintain a perception of continuity of self. Taking into account the presence and absence of feelings of attachment, identity will be defined in relation to compliance/location or contrast/distancing respectively. People that showed a particularly marked attachment to places had a more sedentary behaviour and used places as anchorage for those important memories they wanted to be connected to. But those with markedly less attachment explained their choice of moving to new places as symbolizing the passage to a new life and the construction of new aspects of self.

This latter position is consistent with the Identity Process Theory elaborated by Breakwell (1999), according to which identity is oriented by the search for self-esteem and self-efficacy and by what is distinctive/unique and continuous. In this regards, Knez (2005) has shown that places can become objects for identification and preservation of the continuity with the past, for promoting self-esteem and reinforcing a sense of personal competence. When this does not happen one's sense of identity is threatened and the individual is forced to re-orient himself using coping strategies.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of what has emerged from studies in environmental psychology concerning the relation between people and their environment, the kind of analysis adopted in this study can be further specified.

Maps produced by the subjects that have taken part in this project focus on lived places and therefore these will be analysed taking into consideration all the aspects these places are connected with. Places of origin should be considered in their morphological and social features, towards which people develop an attachment that is connected to emotional states in variable ways. The most relevant dimension for the formation of attachment is the social one, in other words the relational dimension that characterizes places. Attachment to places deeply influences identity on the level of formation and conservation, as much as innovation and change. It has in fact been shown that places function as reference point for the continuity of sense of self on the spatio-temporal level. Besides, by making specific reference to childhood places of origin are connected to one of those moments in life in which attachment and its influence on identity tend to be more intense. And yet, as maps are realized at a later stage in one's life it is important to take into consideration some variables that could influence the re-reading of the relationship with one's place of origin. For example, the following factors should be considered: age; the specific moment in one's life; projects for change connected to this and whether individuals have maintained a close proximity with their places or not. It has been noted how the meaning of places increases and surfaces to consciousness mainly when one breaks off from them and in relation to individual needs and movements from one place to the other.

Hence, while in the majority of cases, places tend to be associated with positive emotions, it should be considered that this emotional connection is more complex and multifaceted. From this perspective a psychological analysis should also attempt to highlight negative as well as positive emotions.

### ***2.3 Clinic Psychology and the Origin of Personal Meaning***

What has been described so far has shown on the one hand the influence of the processes of elaboration of information for graphic transpositions of mental representations, and, on the other hand, the importance of lived places – particularly childhood

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<sup>1</sup>The term coping refers to the process through which individuals attempt to manage stressing or problematizing events through mental and/or behavioural modalities.

places – for the formation and maintaining of personal identity. The clinical theories that follow represent a further interpretative framework that not only can be integrated with that above, but can also connect with what has been noted in relation to the cognitive and environmental approach so far.

Precisely because it has a therapeutic function, clinical psychology has had to develop theoretical models for understanding human experience that can explain mental functioning in normal and pathological situations. According to the latest developments, a complete understanding of human experience requires that we consider individual variables as well as social and environmental ones and their reciprocal connections simultaneously.

In this respect, an important contribution to the existing scholarship has come from the post-rationalist cognitive approach and, in particular, the constructivism one developed by Guidano and Liotti (1979, 1981, 1983). According to this perspective, the human mind is considered as a system of construction of meanings, as the latter are responsible for the construction of a sense of self that is continuous, consistent and coherent. Meanings characterize our lives and enable us to find constant models of experience without which we would experience a sense of fragmentation. External data should therefore be considered as perturbations that later will be elaborated in a self-referential fashion in order to smooth out discrepancies and maintain an internal coherence. The consequence is that any form of self-knowledge and experience of the world represents a form of self-deceit.

To understand this process of attribution of meaning it is important to consider that human experience occurs on two different levels, that are closely connected and interchange continuously. The first level is represented by immediate experience, that is to say by lived experience that characterizes our experience of the world without awareness. The second is defined explanatory, which provides order and sequencing to our experiences. The specific way in which each individual tends to structure and provide sense for experience in order to preserve internal coherence is defined in terms of organization of personal meaning.

The structuring of the process that underlies the construction of sense of self can be better understood in the light of the Theory of Attachment developed by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980). As we live in an intersubjective world marked by continuous interactions, human experience is mainly social. Therefore, the only way to construct a continuous, coherent and substantial sense of self rests on the possibility of experimenting with stable and exclusive relations. Attachment is an innate and adaptive motivational system that from when we are born enables us to enter into a relationship with our caregivers, that is to say with adults who can take care and protect us against external dangers. Later on in life, the repeated interactions with caregivers will favour the development of internal working models (IWM), that is to say complementary representational schemes of the self, of one's attachment figures and of one's environment that will orient the elaboration of cognitive and emotional information as well as human behaviour at all levels. Therefore depending on the particular characteristics of the couple "child-caregiver", specific interactive patterns will be developed in order to maintain this relation through cognitive or affective strategies (or an integration of the two). Though IWM develop during early

years, they remain stable in time and continue to influence the way in which individuals organize their experience and interact with their socio-relational and physical environment.

Attachment also has deep implications for explorative behaviours and the way one perceives one's lived environment. It is a process that involves a dialectics of proximity and separation from the caregiver. Only if the child/caregiver couple gives adequate and predictable answers, will the IWM be able to integrate cognitive and emotional information in a flexible manner, allowing for explorative behaviour that does not threaten one's sense of self.

A further theoretical approach that underlines the importance of childhood experiences in the process of structuring human personality is Script Theory by Tomkins (1979). According to Tomkins, each individual stores in his/her memory a number of scenes or scripts. Scenes are complex representations of events that include thoughts, emotions, behaviours, people, temporal dimensions and places. Through a magnification process, the individual puts together a series of scenes that, he thinks, are relevant from an affective point of view and which show an analogy of a kind, so that he/she can confer meaning on his/her experience. Scripts are sorts of screenplays, that is to say roles through which a person interprets new experiences and provides responses based on past scenes that bear analogy. Initially scenes determine scripts, then, little by little, the influencing process becomes bidirectional. With the passing of time, scripts start to condition experience to such an extent that they influence scenes retroactively. Individuals possess different scenes that have different contents, relevance and instances of connection with other scenes. Hence only some scenes have a central importance for the individual and they influence their thoughts, emotions and actions during maturity. Tomkins defines as *nuclear scenes*, those that concern events that are so important that they continue to grow and expand during the life cycle, absorbing and ever increasing array of thoughts, emotions and behaviours. From this point of view, the development and dynamics of personality can include growth or disappearance of scenes and scripts.

Maps of places of origin concern specific life spaces connected with childhood and evoke a precise physical and relational world, that is to say the world connected to attachment relations experienced by individuals. Their relevance is connected therefore first of all to their being the contextual framework of people's first significant relationships.

Moreover, as we have noted they are precisely those significant relationships that play a role in the later structuring of personality. In order to provide a sense for one's existence and consequently orient one's behaviour, the individual constructs his/her story looking for analogies and invariants, experimenting in this way a sense of personal unity and continuity. Therefore relational events, in their emotional, cognitive, behavioural and spatial components are filtered and re-elaborated in order to maintain internal coherence.

The ways in which places of origin are mentally represented and graphically reproduced is not only connected to interactive events that took place in these places but also provides information in relation to the structure of knowledge of the individual that has formed him/herself through these experiences.

## 2.4 *Maps of Places of Origin: An Integrated Definition*

The theoretical points mentioned above can re-conceptualize the object of study of this work within a more integrated theoretical framework.

From a psychological point of view, maps of places of origin are the graphic transposition of mental representations of spaces connected with the childhood years. As noted in studies of environmental psychology, these are social and physical places that have a strong influence on the formation and maintaining of personality, so much so that, in order to explore their relevance, concepts of place identity and place attachment have been elaborated. The importance of these environments is connected with the social dimension rather than the physical one.

The central place occupied by places of origin in the structuring of personality is endowed with further meanings in the light of attachment theory and post-rationalist cognitive approaches. These environments represent the contextual framework of fundamental childhood relational events for the construction and conservation of personality. It is precisely from these initial relational experiences that the individual begins to find the meaning of self and of the reality around him/her, gradually structuring his/her way of observing and building a relation with the world.

The representation of places of origin, in mental or graphic form, is subjective and the phenomenological result of an internal re-construction of an external reality. This process of reconstruction, which from a certain point of view we could call “creative”, is based on the simultaneous action of two processes of filtering. Firstly, there are processes connected with human mental functioning common to all individuals. External reality is filtered by sensory organs that can grasp only a limited portion of reality; this is later elaborated by processes of knowledge to produce a mnemonic trace that represents an approximate and re-constructed version of the external world. Secondly, processes connected to the structure of knowledge of the individual based on primary relations of attachment are introduced. External events are therefore read and interpreted in relation to personal meanings and *nuclear scenes* around which personality and behaviour is organized. The action of the filters and their connection with our mental mechanism and structure of knowledge is expressed in Bateson’s comment “The map is not the territory. The name is not the thing named” (1987, p.21).

In conclusion, maps of places of origin do not represent straightforward and simple graphic reproductions of geographical and physical spaces. They are on the contrary highly significant places, stages of scene and relational episodes that are fundamental for the structuring of one’s sense of self that is consistent, stable and temporally continuous. Maps of places of origin are the products of individual processes of construction of sense and therefore they reflect, at least in part, such processes. From a psychological point of view, graphic representations of childhood places can therefore be thought of as a sort of map of self, that is to say a useful instrument to explore organizational and relational ways pertaining the individual starting from situated relational events that have generated them.

### 3 Methodological Issues

The psychological analysis carried out here has been based on the integration of multiple graphical and conversational interpretative models. The choice to employ both these approaches comes from a re-conceptualization of maps of places of origin as maps of self, that is to say as elements that provide an indication of the personality and structure of knowledge of the individual; hence maps can be analysed through the same methods used to explore the individual's aspects mentioned above.

What follows is an illustration of the main characteristics of graphic and conversation approaches as well as some reflections on their employment for the analysis of maps of places of origin.

#### 3.1 *Maps of Places of Origin as Graphic Artefacts*

Maps of places of origin are primarily graphic representations. Psychological approaches have always showed a marked interest in graphic representations, as significant instruments to understand personality.

Psychological interest in drawing is connected to a series of presuppositions. Firstly, since thousands years human beings expressed themselves through drawing, beyond the speech, as witnessed by the Rock Art. Secondly, for children, drawing represents a privileged means to show and share one's internal world. Thirdly, because of the projective hypothesis, human beings tend to see the world in an anthropomorphic fashion, they tend to attribute characteristics that belong to them to aspects and objects in the environment. It is therefore possible to hypothesize that in making a drawing someone uses his/her interior experience and personal history to perceptively organize and structure one's graphic signs. This is particularly so in those cases in which the object to be represented is both significant and, at the same time, ambiguous.

Graphic Projective Tests are based on these presuppositions and they are psychodynamic instruments widely used to evaluate personality. These include the House-Tree-Person Test by Buck (1947), the Tree Test by Koch (1949) or the Human Figure Test by Machover (1949). Each requires that one draws specific content, which is salient from an emotional point of view, but sufficiently ambiguous to favour an unconscious mechanism of projection and block attempts at simulation. This is possible because subjects are not asked to draw their own house, or their tree, or themselves, and in this way exclude direct references to themselves and their stories.

In general, all graphic projective tests can be analysed on three different levels, that considered together provide indications on the personality of each individual.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Each level of analysis enables a number of meanings for the single elements considered. To reinforce the interpretative hypotheses is however necessary to compare the meanings that have emerged from different levels of analysis.

On the first level we have the analysis of the graphic aspect that uses as indicators the stroke, the pressure applied to it, the presence of blackenings, erasures and shadowings. On a second level we have the formal analysis that considers the uses of space in the piece of paper and the latter orientation, symmetry, perspective, movement, thoroughness as well as dimensions and proportions of the elements. On a third level, it is possible to analyse the drawing in relation to its contents,<sup>3</sup> providing specific meanings in relation to the presence/absence of certain elements and to the way these are represented. Lastly, it is important to consider the attitude of the individuals when they are assigned the task and during its execution.

Asking to draw maps of one's place of origin presents some analogies with graphic projective tests, but it shows also some important differences in evaluating the kind of analysis that is possible with the material that has been collected.

Childhood places constitute a graphic stimulus that is very significant and evocative. And yet, the direct reference to one's personal story seems to leave little space for unconscious projective mechanisms, hence partially reducing interpretative possibilities. Moreover, graphic analysis requires that specific procedures should be followed. For example, each graphic test provides specific indications on the dimension of the piece of paper to be used and on its orientation when this is handed to the subject, on the type of pencil to be used (more or less hard) on the possibility to use an eraser and coloured pencils. In general, the use of a very hard or very soft pencil and coloured pencils is not recommended, as this reduces the interpretative possibilities of the stroke and its pressure. Lastly, the attribution of specific meanings to the drawn elements is based on the result of studies of specific graphic tests, taking into account particular requirements of the task and operating a standardization of the administering procedures.

The differences I have illustrated above determine a scaling down of interpretative possibilities so that excessively subjective interpretations are avoided.<sup>4</sup> Maps have been analysed on a graphic and formal level only, limiting ourselves to simple reflections about specific elements of content. Concerning the material, only representations made with a medium hard pencil have been considered. Coloured maps have been considered only from a formal point of view.

In respect of interpretative problems connected with an explicit reference to the subject's personal stories, we have considered meanings that have emerged from the graphic and formal analysis as hypothesis subject to verification. Indeed, in psychology it is good practice to use the principle of index convergence, that is to say to base one's analysis on data that come from more than a single source, in order to reduce the subjective contribution of the observer. For this reason, we have decided

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<sup>3</sup>In graphical tests and their interpretation the term "content" is used to indicate that the analysis focuses on specific graphical elements. For example, in the Human Figure Test, content elements concern parts of the body (head, mouth, eyes, chest, legs, arms etc.) that, following standard instructions, should be drawn with the aim of correctly and completely representing a person.

<sup>4</sup>The attribution of specific meanings to the elements of a drawing derives mainly from a corpus of studies and investigations, that, depending on the graphic task, (tree, human figure, house etc.), connect certain aspects pertaining the person and emotions to graphical, formal and content aspects of the drawing.



to integrate graphic and formal analyses similar to those for graphic tests with an analysis of conversational aspects that have emerged.

### 3.2 *Maps of Places of Origin as Narratives*

Maps of places of origin refer to places of childhood experience that we have defined as scenes and fundamental relational episodes for the structuring and maintaining of one's sense of self as consistent, stable and temporally continuous. As such, maps are the product of processes of internal re-elaborations that are fundamental for an individual's sense of self and their relational and modalities of knowledge. The graphic reproductions during our research work concern these important autobiographical episodes. When we ask someone to draw and comment on their maps, we are asking them to evoke and re-think their places of origin and the events that are connected with these.

In order that internal representations can be shared, both verbally and graphically, it is necessary that these are first articulated and structured by thought. As Bruner noted (1991), human life occurrences find their coherence and meaning when thought re-organizes and establishes by way of language mnemonic traces an underlying identity. In this respect autobiography resembles a text, that is to say a narrative that allows a form for individual experience, re-interpreting it in the "here and now" of the present time. From these premises follows the analogy promoted by narrative models between life and literary texts, as well as the realization that human experiences are unveiled and shared mainly through language activity. In particular, Guidano's post-rationalist approach (1991, 1995) has developed a kind of clinical intervention that investigates narrative modalities and register in order to widen patients' knowledge and produce therapeutic change. Through a conversational approach it is possible to expand the knowledge of subjective experience through the co-construction of shared personal narratives.

Conversation represents therefore an inter-subjective space in which narrator and listener can reach a more complete understanding of internal experience that is indicative of an individual's organizational modalities. Events that are narrated become a text – i.e. public and external data – that can be the object of understanding, explanation, interpretation and change. And yet, to make possible the broadening of knowledge, it is necessary that the patient-narrator be guided by the psychologist-listener that should orient, not just the conversation, but also patient's attitude of knowledge. In particular, the psychotherapist enters all dimensions of the conversation and employs particular conversational activities and procedures (Lenzi and Bercelli 1999, 2010).

The conversational dimensions are placed on three different levels that can be connected to the way in which knowledge is organized. The first level concerns "what is being talked about", that is to say contents connected with personal life stories. The second level concerns "how something is talked about" that is the processes of knowledge that underlie language. Lastly, the third level concerns "with

whom we are talking” that is to say the interactive dynamic that characterises the conversation.

Conversational procedures envisage a first phase in which the argument of conversation is to be defined. Next comes the cycles of inquiry and re-definition in which the recording of episodes alternates with questions, opinions and reformulations from the expert. Through inquiry and re-definition the patient and psychotherapist can focus on themes underlying the narrative that are indicative of the organization of individual personal meanings. To make this possible it is however of primary importance that the patient is advised about how to place him/herself at a right distance from his/her experiential contents, positioning him/herself as subject and object of his/her inquiry and working in this way in the interface between immediate experience and explanation. In this way the patient can integrate in his/her self-knowledge information that was dormant.

Previously the importance of integrating a formal and graphic analysis of maps with an analysis of the conversational aspects that have emerged during the administering procedure has been highlighted. Given what has just been said, maps of places of origin may be seen as activators of complex narrative re-elaborations and connected to individual organizing modalities in their cognitive, emotional and relational aspects. Maps, on the one hand, are like a sort of image narrative and, on the other hand, can become an object of conversation laying bare experiential factors that could not have been otherwise known. On the other hand, the administering procedure has invited the subjects involved to describe, comment and explain their maps. Their narrative, once it has been shared with the researcher, has become the object of a conversation that, by its own nature, opens up the possibility of reciprocal involvement.

In this regard it is interesting to note that the alternation between different perspectives from which to look one's experience and maps emerges vividly in the analysis by Murgiano in chapter “[Into the Map: The Re-enactment of Experience in Sign Languages' Representation of Places of Origin](#)”, this volume. Deaf people using the Italian Sign Language adopt a communicative modality that enables them to “say” through “showing”.

For the reasons mentioned above, we have decided to single out the narrative aspects connected to the reconstruction of the individual history and which are indicative of the personal functional modes that emerged during the conversations. Taking the spontaneous narration from the subject as a starting point, we have asked questions aimed at refining or clarifying information in order to improve the evolution of the narration and to find deeper information about the cognitive, emotional and relational components connected to the place of origin. Particular attention has been devoted to those childhood events that spontaneously emerged from the narrative and also to those processes that have oriented the choice and the construction of the map.

## 4 Analysis of Results

Theoretical and methodological reflections previously illustrated have led to an integrated approach to the analysis of maps. In particular, psychological reflections have concentrated on three types of data:

- Specific reactions from the subjects following the request to draw and comment “a kind of map” of their places of origin as well as those that occurred during the act of drawing.
- Paper maps.
- Brief conversations on the description and illustration of maps.

Methodologically, the majority of paper maps have been analysed formally and graphically following some of the indicators used by graphic projective tests. Verbal aspects have been studied only in those maps that have been administered by a psychologist, with particular attention paid to contents, processes and interactive aspects. The integration of these different kinds of analysis has enabled a fuller understanding of the personal meaning that places of origin have for individuals.

What follows are some psychological reflections that have emerged from the graphic and conversational analysis of the maps. Some particularly significant maps representative of specific meanings associated with the emotional and cognitive components of places of origin will also be described and commented.

### 4.1 *Reactions to the Request to Draw Maps of One's Place of Origin*

The request to draw and comment “a sort of map” of one's place of origin has predictably raised different reactions from the subjects involved. The majority of them welcomed this request, openly showing interest, curiosity and pleasure; some others, a minority, were uneasy or even showed some resistance. This data is coherent with research data in environmental psychology that has shown how reflection about places of origins are associated to positive emotions, though it can be hypothesize that the relationship with one's lived spaces is, from an emotional point of view, more complex and multifaceted.

In this stage, the most interesting reactions are those associated with attitudes that we could classify according to four categories: detached, engaging, anxious, refusing. Each of these reactions is reflected in certain graphic and conversational styles that have also emerged in later phases. Detached reactions have been characterized by silence and unperturbed behaviour, but also by concentration, as if no affective content was at stake and all could be seen as a simple graphic exercise. Subjects engaged have provided comments and explanations while drawing, giving the impression of wanting to involve the researcher. Subjects that have shown states of anxiety have typically tended to ask questions concerning the aim of the research

work; they often interrupted their work expressing doubts on what they were drawing and asked to be reassured. Finally, there were those that refused the task, they didn't execute the drawing or represented only places that belong to their more recent history.

The attitudes that have just been described seem to confirm the idea that to draw and comment on one's place of origin activates emotionally relevant aspects of the self that are not always associated with positive affective states. Depending on the kind of functioning, the individual may try to have a detached attitude towards the map, involve the researcher, ask to be reassured, or refuse to collaborate.

In any case, in the administering phase we have merely registered single reactions, without making inferences. Except in those cases in which there was a refusal to draw a map, a better understanding of the subject's position can be gathered only through the analysis of other typologies of data that were produced.

## ***4.2 Formal and Graphic Analysis of Maps***

The maps gathered during this research offer the possibility to observe different modalities through which places of one's childhood can be represented graphically. It is important to point out that graphic choices are not casual, but rather representative of particular aspects of each individual. As mentioned above, maps represent a personal construction of one's lived environment that is oriented by mental functioning in general and peculiar modalities of knowledge pertaining to each single individual.

The choice of what to draw and how to draw is therefore indicative of personal aspects connected to the story of the subject. For example, the graphic element – such as the childhood home – can be positioned in several different sections of the drawing that point to different degrees of centrality in relation to the other elements. In general it is important to point out that the most interesting aspects of a graphic representation are the discontinuities or differences that are juxtaposed with the other elements of the drawing. This means that in the attempt to analyse a single map, attention has been mainly concentrated on the elements that are incongruous stylistically such as for example the occasional pressure applied to the pencil in a drawing that is generally characterized by a light stroke. Moreover, single graphic elements are not sufficient for a complete analysis and the attribution of meaning. Only through the convergence of various indexes (and not solely graphic ones) it is possible to reach plausible interpretative hypotheses. For this reason, maps illustrated here should not be interpreted in relation to the meaning of a single element alone. Human beings are indeed too complex to be understood from a single point of view.

From a formal point of view, maps of places of origin have been analysed taking into consideration characteristics such as the spatial use of the piece of paper, dimensions, proportions, completeness and perspective.





Fig. 2 Example of a map mainly oriented towards the lower left part of the piece of paper



Fig. 3 Example of a map that is full of details

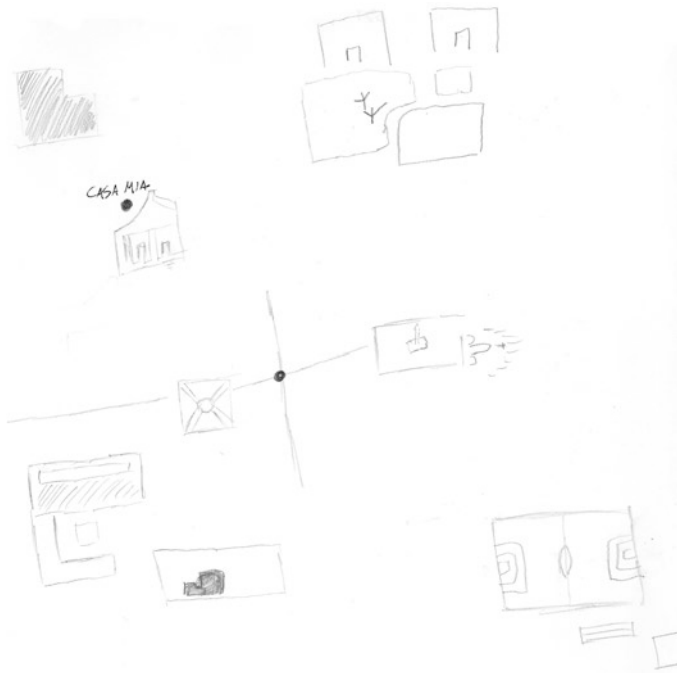


Fig. 4 Example of a map that lacks details



Fig. 5 Examples of a map showing disproportioned elements

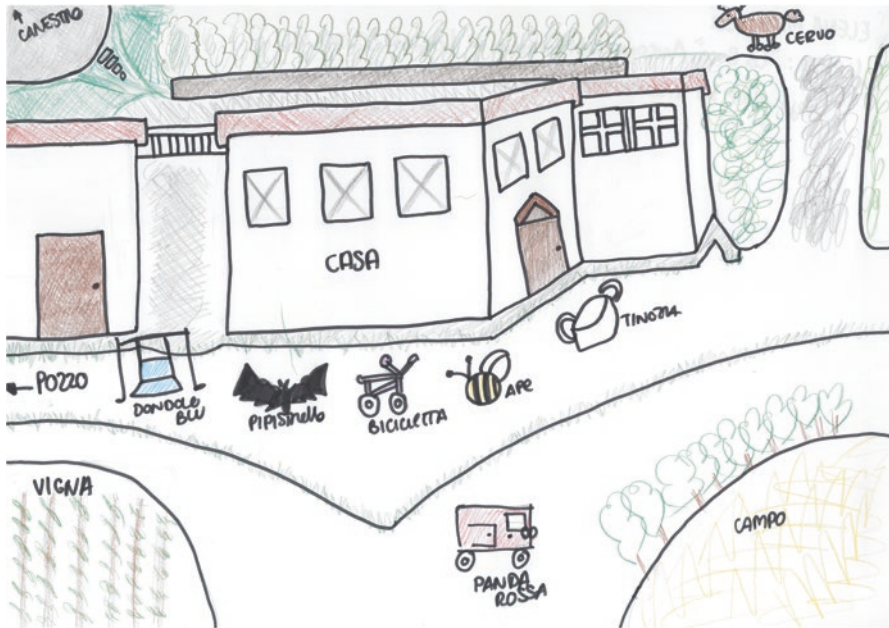


Fig. 6 Example of a map that shows only the home

The importance of an element can be gathered also in relation to the degree of completeness of the map. Initial instructions have required to draw “a kind of map that includes your home and then the spaces that have or have been significant for you”. The maps that have been gathered show that people have often interpreted these instructions freely. In some cases, only the home has been drawn (Fig. 6), in other cases this is difficult to identify because of the dimension of the map (Fig. 7). From an interpretative point of view, the presence/absence of graphic aspects requested by the instructions given provides the same meaning as dimensions and presence of disproportions. Not drawing one’s home represents an attempt to reduce its importance, while representing it exclusively underlines its relevance that can be either positive or negative.

As far as perspective is concerned it has been interesting to see that different points of view have been used. In some cases a birds-eye view has been adopted (Fig. 8), in other cases the map shows frontal perspective (Fig. 9). In some other cases, multiple perspectives have been used (Fig. 10). In general, perspective is indicative of the degree of self-disclosure. A birds-eye view provides a complete vision of the territory, and also distances places from the one who draws them and the one who observes. A frontal perspective is more engaging and human because it creates proximity and enables the fruition of more personal features for understanding one’s environment. When multiple perspectives are used, it is interesting to





Fig. 7 Example of map in which it is difficult to localize the home



Fig. 8 Example of birds-eye view

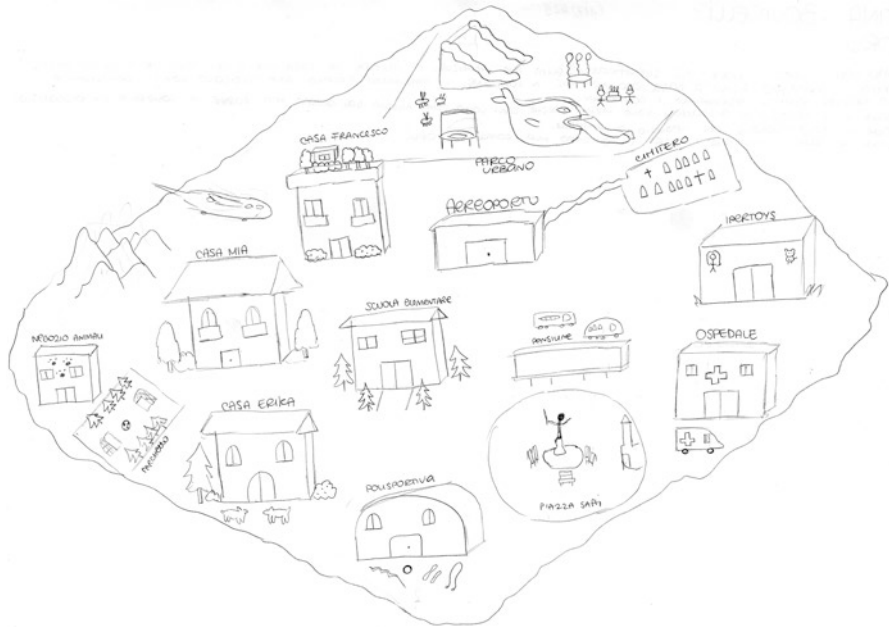


Fig. 9 Example of frontal perspective

analyse which elements are represented through a frontal perspective and which through a birds-eye view.

A final formal consideration concerns the development and articulation of the map. It is interesting to note that in some cases the maps produced have been used to represent geographically discontinuous environments (Fig. 11) and sometimes a collage of photographic images of single elements (Fig. 12). This indicates that significant lived spaces, despite being a continuous territory, are registered and connected in a personal and original way according to the emotional significance they have.

The analysis of maps from a graphic point of view has taken into consideration indicators connected to the typology of the stroke, the pressure applied by the pencil on the paper, blackening of elements and erasures, if present. Specifically, it is not so much the general style that has been analysed, rather once again discontinuous elements in relation to the overall drawing. In a drawing that is characterized overall by a light and scarcely marked stroke, it is interesting to note the localized presence of graphic elements characterized by a different and stronger pressure. In general, an excessively light stroke is associated to insecurity. On the other hand, a rigid and geometric stroke is indicative of tension or the need to control. Visible blackening and erasures are associated with anxiety and tension.

What has been noted in this paragraph on the graphic and formal aspects of maps represent simple interpretative hypotheses. In order to understand fully the meaning of all these elements it has been necessary to take into consideration the descriptions



Fig. 10 Example of frontal perspective and birds-eye view together

and verbal accounts given by the authors of the maps. The presence of tension that can be gathered from the kind of stroke used is, from an interpretive point of view, a vague data. In this case it is important note whether this is confirmed by anecdotes and episodes during the conversation.

### 4.3 Talking About Maps

The conversations concerning the spontaneous description of the maps have defined better the personal meaning given to places of origin, and, consequently, have been useful in clarifying and completing the formal and graphic analyses of maps.

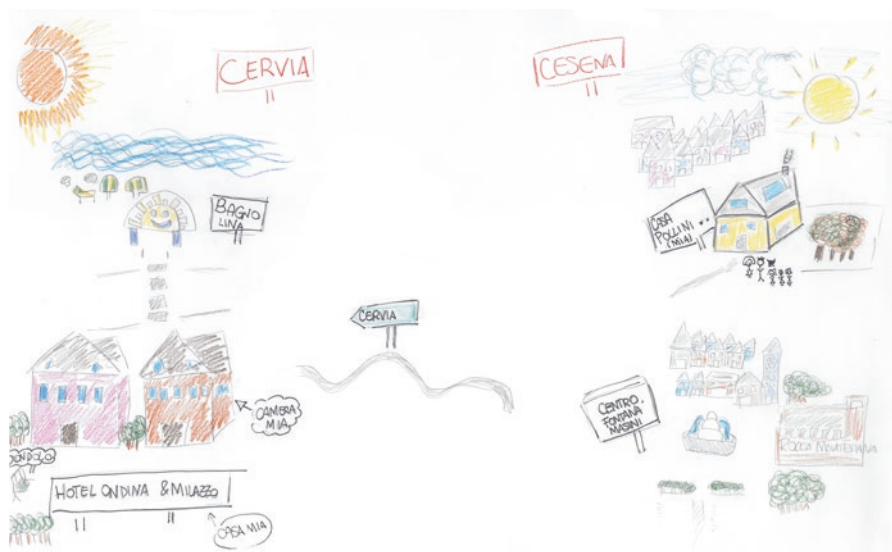


Fig. 11 Example of a map with discontinuous territories



Fig. 12 Example of a map with photographic collage



**Fig. 13** Example of map with coloured sections

The relevance of these conversations in shedding light on personal meanings that are not immediately intelligible has emerged first of all in descriptions of maps made with coloured pencils. As mentioned above, graphic analysis has been made only for those maps drawn with a medium hardness grade pencil. During the conversations that followed it was possible to understand the meaning of a specific use of colour, especially in those cases in which this was limited to certain parts of the map.

In map in Fig. 13, for example, it is possible to note that the use of colour has been limited to specific sections. In the course of the discussions it has emerged that the coloured parts indicated the places in which the author used to play with other children the same age as her. The most interesting aspect of this example emerged later on: the most colourful parts, those on the left of the drawing, are connected to an important evolution phase, that is to say the acquisition of increased autonomy in exploring space. The author of the drawing, in fact, has told us that for a long time her ludic activities took place in the circumscribed area underneath her home, because her mother wanted to be able to always check where she was. The possibility to go beyond that space where she was free of maternal control represented for her a longed-for achievement. These details can be gathered by her words: “We have waited for several years before being able to go there”. This example shows that the importance of a particular place in terms of possibilities of exploration and independence from family control could not have emerged without an analysis of the content of the conversation.

The analysis of the conversations of the maps has been useful not just to understand the meaning of some of their formal and graphic aspects, but also to highlight elements connected to the individual's history and style of knowledge.

The focus of the analysis of the dialogues has been on three different factors. Firstly, attention has been concentrated on contents that have emerged spontaneously or through expressed requests for clarification. Secondly, processes of knowledge underlying narrations have been studied, these included modalities of reconstruction of past episodes and their re-readings. Lastly, relational modalities that have emerged during the conversation have also been analysed.

In general, comments on the maps began with a brief description of the physical and spatial characteristics of places in an attempt to help the interviewer's understanding. In the course of this dialogue, other and more interesting data emerged. In order to narrate the places drawn, the subjects described relational episodes that took place precisely inside those places. These included episodes of domestic life, games, trips, holidays etc. These details are interesting as they provide confirmation of the direct and indirect associations between places and those who have lived or still live in them. In this respect it is possible to hypothesize that the maps of places of origin represent activators of relational events connected to one's childhood. To describe one's place of origin means therefore to articulate a narration of social situations that have characterized and marked these places.

While investigating the strategies that have led to the construction of maps, it has also emerged that faced with instructions to make a drawing, subjects have tended to visualize fragments of relational episodes that they deemed important. Therefore, it seems that, on the one hand, maps are inspired by memories of relational events and, on the other, they activate a deeper narrative re-organization of events at the point in which these are shared and become objects of dialogue.

In this regard, it has been possible to note that the episodes recounted, though very different in relation to one's specific personal history, could be divided into two typologies that suggest the use of different narrative registers: episodic and semantic. The first instance includes very specific events, that are described in a vivid fashion, paying little attention to chronological and causal aspects. The sequencing of events follows an affective order, as if it was guided by the unfolding of sensations and not of actual events. This is shown by the use of an emotional lexicon in descriptions concerning sensations associated to places. In the second case events are described as general, habitual and recurrent and deprived of affective qualities. In this case the unfolding of the events has followed a cognitive order, and for this reason particular attention has been devoted to chronology. The lexis is cognitively marked.

It is interesting to note that, as expected, the emotional universe associated with places of origin is very wide and diversified. And yet, a common tendency has also been noted: at the beginning of the narration mainly positive feelings emerged, but as episodes started to be studied in detail, negative emotions such as anger and sadness also emerged. This is predictable because to talk about one's place of origin means to talk about important people that lived there. Relational experience is characterized by positive and negative emotions, and therefore it is inevitable that this is

true also for those places connected with such relations. Only when a map is explored in respect to episodes it evokes is it possible to explore fully the emotions that underlie it and get in contact with them. If we stop at a superficial description it is possible that only positive characteristics emerge, in order to avoid any form of perturbations.

As regards relational modalities that have emerged during the narration, it is possible to note two kinds of interpersonal styles that are related to reactions during the administering phase as well as the typologies of episodes and narrative registers described above. Those who have described specific events emotionally connoted have tended to use an engaging style, while those who narrated generic and cognitively connoted episodes used a more detached style.

A particularly important aspect that emerged during these conversations concerns the possibility to expand one's knowledge of self. As already noted, the dialogue on the graphic production represents an instrument that enables a better understanding of places of origin. This dialogue also enables a process of self-reflection.

Descriptions of maps from spontaneous narratives, in which a narrating subject and listeners are involved, is gradually transformed into a conversation that involves two interlocutors. This change enables a shared focus on significant episodes that become the object of narrative co-construction.

Each question re-orientates the narrative encouraging the adoption of different points of view in the two interlocutors. Narrative sharing of the events allows the subject that has lived them to look back at his past from a different standpoint, focusing attention on those aspects of his/her experience that previously were left in the background. In this respect, it has been noted that whenever the narration has led to the adoption of different points of view concentrating on aspects previously overlooked, the subject tended to show surprise and begin to reflect on the new data in the attempt to explain and interpret them. It has been possible in this way to observe a process of self-reflection that testifies to an expansion of knowledge both in the subject involved and in the researcher. In this way, subjects have often re-evaluated their maps, re-reading them as important places for the construction of their identity and personal way of being.

The expansion of knowledge has often been associated with the desire to expand the knowledge of maps. Though this is not among the aims of this work, it also implies some reflections that will be considered in the following section.

#### ***4.4 Comparing Two Cases***

What follows shows that the graphical and formal analysis of maps as well as the conversational analysis enable an expansion of knowledge of personal meanings associated to places of origin in their relational and organizational quality. In particular, two cases will be analysed that are representative of the main modalities in which childhood places have been narrated and represented.

### 4.4.1 M.'s Case

M. is a 24 year old female, university student, and comes from a small village in Puglia.

From the beginning she collaborates and reacts with enthusiasm when requested to draw her place of origin; she states “I like my village very much, I don’t go back there often but it brings me joy thinking of it”. The drawing of the map is accompanied by several comments or anecdotes that refer to what she is drawing.

From a graphic and formal point of view, the map (Fig. 14) is comprehensive and seems to represent an agricultural landscape. However, some discontinuous elements can be noted. These include for example the house in which she lived (lower corner on the left), the tractor (upper corner on the left), the station (on the right) and three buildings in the village (lower corner on the right).

From a graphical point of view, each of these elements is different from the rest of the map because of the stroke and the pressure applied by the pencil. Lines that are generally lightly traced and continuous give way to a thick stroke in the parts mentioned above, suggesting emotional activity. Moreover, near the station lines appear discontinuous and this could suggest uncertainty and nervousness.

From a formal point of view the thickness of the stroke is associated with other inconsistencies. For example, the home shows a wealth of details and dimensions are larger. These graphic-formal elements seem to suggest an emotional activation and a particular centrality connected with elements that are discontinuous in rela-

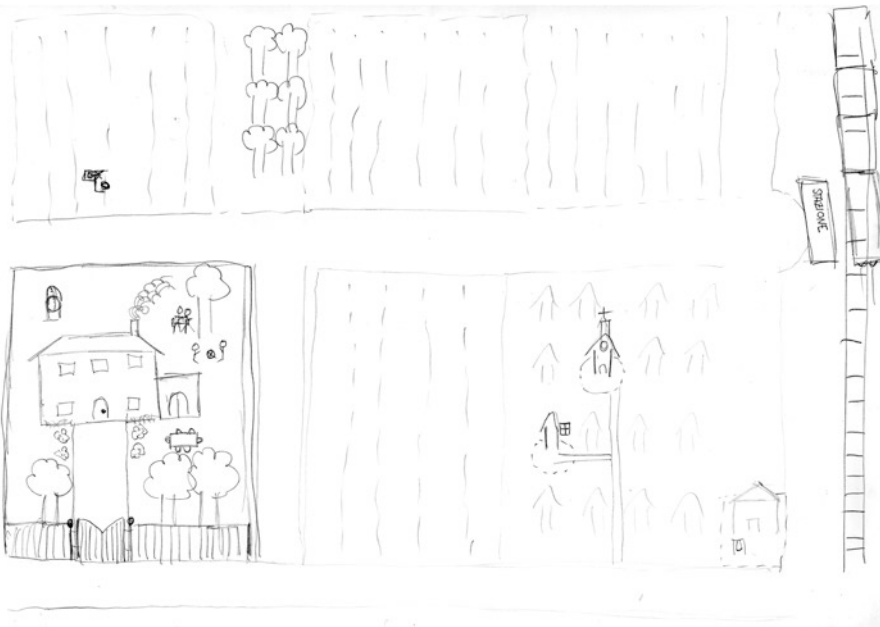


Fig. 14 M.'s map



tion to the rest of the map. Overall a frontal perspective can be noted and this indicates a higher level of self-disclosure and involvement. The piece of paper is covered entirely and communicates an idea of fullness. And yet, it is interesting to note that the area representing the agricultural fields (that initially were left empty) were filled quickly only toward the end of the drawing process with discontinuous lines traced hastily- an indication of a need for control.

Many aspects of content have been considered during conversation. Firstly the only human beings that are represented are near M.'s house. Moreover, it seems that a lot of attention has been devoted to the outline and fences around buildings are traced with a more marked stroke.

The order in which elements have been drawn is also significant: the drawing has developed starting from the lower left corner that is to say from M.'s house. The collocation of the house, associated with the richness of details and a kind of stroke, could indicate uncertainty, insecurity and the presence of a more emotional functioning.

Faced with the request to comment and describe her map M. began with a description of the colours of her village and the feeling of freedom and peace associated with her life in a green belt area away from the city. The narrative soon becomes an autobiography marked by episodes associated with specific elements of the drawing. In this regard it is interesting to note that the events narrated are connected precisely with those aspects that in the map appeared peculiar from the point of view of the formal and graphical analysis.

The narration is immediately centred on M.'s story. M. has a sister 5 years younger. Her mother is a housewife and the father works the land. She says that she has always lived in the same place until her high school diploma and after that she has left her village to study in Bologna. During her childhood she used to spend a lot of time at home with her sister and mother. She very rarely went to the village and never alone, because they lived far away and the road to the village was very busy and dangerous. What emerged in her narration are anecdotes and episodes of games in the home garden and of domestic life. When she got older she started to catch the coach to school alone, to church or to the chemist to get medicines for her mum whose health was not very good. When the issues of exploration are brought to the fore, episodes that communicate dissatisfaction of the lack of autonomy of movement emerge. In this regard, M. highlights that her life has changed a lot when she moved to Bologna to study at the university. Initially she often returned home by train because she found it hard to settle in a big city, later it became more difficult to go back home as she had to study a lot, but also because she did not want to give up her freedom. At the time of the interview M. was about to graduate and was very torn: on the one hand she wanted to live closer to her parents, whom she missed very much, on the other she was afraid that going back home would mean losing her freedom. At this point of the conversation, M. looked at the map, pointing at the gate of her house and said "I wouldn't want this to become my prison".

M.'s conversation was engaging and encouraged reciprocal dialogue. This is highlighted by the narration of several specific episodes characterized by the use of an emotional language, rich in emotional tones. Nostalgia and happiness present in the first part of the narration are mixed with insecurity and anger. In relation to

content, the independence/dependence theme is central and characterizes various episodes of her past life, as well as her present and future decisions.

From the cumulative analysis of the graphic and verbal material it is possible to understand M.'s situation and the meanings associated with her places of origin and relations. The graphical and formal discontinuities are explained by the narration of significant episodes. It is in this way possible to understand that M.'s relation with her places of origin is very complex. These are spaces mainly associated with her family relations that she wishes to get closer to but also distance herself from at the same time. M.'s dilemma emerges in the map and through this becomes an object of dialogue and self-reflection.

#### 4.4.2 E.'s Case

E. is a 20 year old female, university student, and comes from a city in the Marche region.

She collaborates, but does not manifest any particular interest in the task at hand. She only asks some practical information on the dimension and width of the map. During the drawing she does not speak, comment, or ask questions.

From a graphical and formal point of view the map (Fig. 15) is complete and seems to represent a maritime landscape. In this example discontinuous aspects are also present.

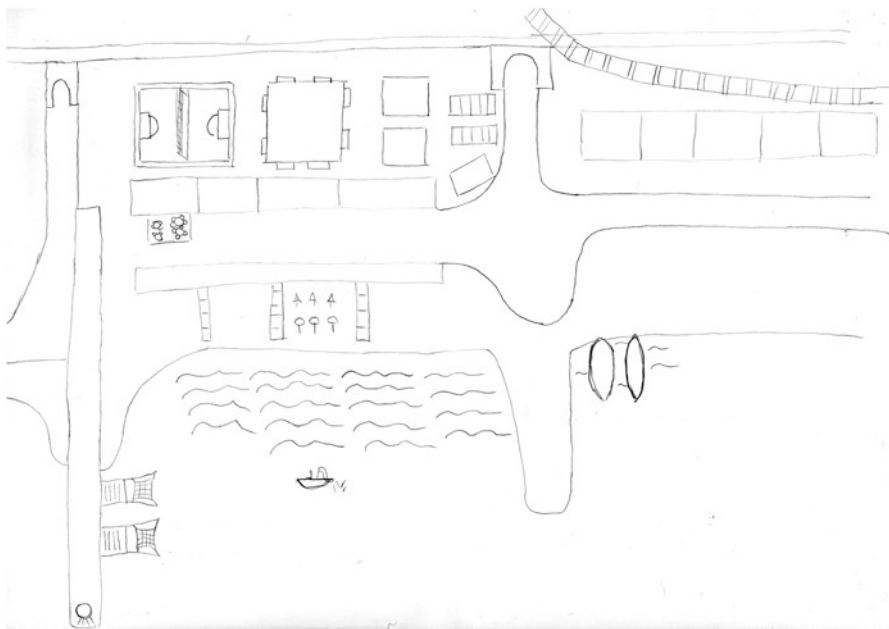


Fig. 15 E.'s map

From a graphical point of view, the stroke is fairly uniform and characterized by continuous lines that are not too thick and at the same time rigidly controlled. The only discontinuous strokes are in the lower part of the drawing, where three water crafts are drawn – later these will be identified as *pedalò*. Here the stroke becomes uncertain and more marked, suggesting an emotional valence.

On a formal level, a birds-eye view is mainly used indicating an effect of distancing. And yet, the area of the beach seems to occasionally show a frontal perspective, as can be noted by the beach umbrellas and the *pedalò* below them. This could indicate a stronger contact with the aspects connected with these elements. The drawing occupies the whole piece of paper though there are several white spaces, predominantly in the lower area, where the sea is represented. The fact that the upper half of the paper is more crowded could indicate autonomy, a functioning more oriented to rationality and an inclination to planning.

As far as the content is concerned, it is interesting to note that despite the presence of elements connected to men (tables, beach umbrellas, etc), human beings are totally absent and buildings are merely sketched.

Observation of the order in which the drawing was executed shows that it has developed from the central part of the piece of paper, and has progressed towards the upper part first and then the lower one. The beach and the coast are therefore the first elements that have been drawn reinforcing the hypothesis of a rational functioning.

When E. is asked to comment and describe her map, she says that she has drawn a place that is different from the one she is living; the place is her grandparents' house. To explain the reasons of her choice she begins to tell her story.

E.'s house is further away from the sea, and ever since she was young E. spent a lot of time with her maternal parents because her parents were preoccupied by their jobs and careers. The house of her grandparents, which in the drawing is the building on the right of the sports ground, is the place where she spent the majority of her childhood years, in particular while she was at school, when her mother got ill and had to leave her job. After this comment, E. becomes sad for an instant but immediately goes back to describing the map, talking about general episodes connected with the summer period. She says that her grandparents always thought her wise and for this reason she was granted a certain independence, in particular she was allowed to spend a lot of time on the beach on her own or with a cousin slightly older than her. She describes long walks looking for shells and excursions with the *pedalò*. It is interesting to note a detail that E. spontaneously provides. She points at the *pedalò* in the lower left and explains that the small strokes faintly traced under the slide represent she and her cousin diving. Their favourite game was to see how long they could stay under water. At this point the conversation moved to the present. E. said she owes a lot to the sea and the beach as “the sea has taught me to rely on my own strengths. If you become nervous and agitated and ask for help you sink, if you concentrate you can let the sea rock you and float comfortably”. It is because of this that she has had no problems to settle in a new city and feels ready to embark in a study period abroad.

The analysis of the narrative shows a detached, precise and ordered conversational modality. Her narrative is fluid and characterized by the employment of a cognitive lexis with few affective references. Even when the narrative touches on sensitive issues, her attitude remains detached. The episodes that E. shares are reported in general terms, no specific situation that could be investigated in detail are referred to. As far as the content is concerned there is no reference to relational factors. It appears that E.'s story is characterized by a series of solitary and autonomous experiences. This is also reconfirmed in the conclusive comments in which she talks about her future plans.

The cumulative analysis of maps and verbal description provides a better understanding of the meanings that E. associates with her places of origin and the relational world associated with these. Once again, formal and graphic discontinuities are taken into consideration when they are related to conversational data. E.'s spaces are rather empty spaces, both graphically and socially. They are spaces in which she has developed her autonomous existence and capacity to face situations on her own. E.'s solitary temperament is indicated by blank spaces in the map and is re-interpreted in the implications of self-sufficiency through the conversation.

## **5 Conclusions, Applications and Future Perspectives**

The psychological analysis of maps of places of origin and their commentaries have provided a starting point for an integrated explanation of the relationship between individual and environment, as well as its implications for personal organizational functioning.

The data that have emerged, though descriptive seems to indicate that the personal meaning that individuals give to the places of their childhood are mainly connected with a relational dimension. These environments are never described as such, that is to say solely in their physical characteristics. Places are always represented and narrated in relation to events and relational dynamics. Nostalgia, anger, disgust are emotions that refer to the relational environment rather than the physical one.

In this sense, it is possible to think about places of origins as potential activators of personal narrative. Through the graphic representation and the conversation, places can be shared and become the object of a dialogical analysis. For these reasons, very personal meanings connected to relational and cognitive modalities of the individual have emerged. It has not been simply an activation of emotions, thoughts, and isolated and circumscribed relational aspects. The episodes represented and narrated provided information that is indicative of relational modalities of knowledge of the individual. This is probably connected to the act of investigating the places of one's childhood, that is to say a place in which the individual begins to organize him/herself according to his/her attachment relations. Moreover the expansion of one's knowledge does not concern solely the researcher, but also the authors of the maps, who in several cases have re-interpreted their graphic productions adding new meanings and different perspectives.

From a methodological point of view it is important to highlight the importance of using a kind of analysis that integrates graphic and formal aspects with the conversational ones. In this way it has been possible to realize a multi-level investigation that is recurring and circular. The map has encouraged a narration that in turn has activated the description of another graphic element.

The possibility to activate personal narrative that unveil cognitive contents and processes, as well as relational modalities has led to a typology of data that represent a cornerstone in the post-rationalist cognitive approach.

The shared exploration of significant episodes between immediate and explained experience with the aim of focusing on personal meanings is used by many psychotherapists in clinical studies. Given that a brief conversation has been enough to re-surface deep emotional and cognitive contents, this procedure could obtain extraordinary results if adapted to a clinical context. Indeed, the use of material such as photographs, drawings or images is well known in psychotherapy. Everything that stimulates the sharing of personal narrative can become an instrument of therapeutic action. In this respect, representations and conversations on one's places of origin should not be employed as ways to make a diagnosis, but as graphic and narrative cues that through self-reflection produce self-knowledge.

This is reconfirmed by the fact that in all those cases in which the research question has followed a psychological approach, the subjects involved have openly showed their desire to pursue their narrative. This could be connected to the importance of themes associated to places of origins, or it could be connected to the figure of the interviewer and his/her professional role. In particular, knowing that they were being interviewed by a psychologist could have activated specific expectations in the subject interviewed. Whatever the explanation, to investigate places of origin in a clinical situation is a possibility that is worth considering.

In view of this interesting practical application, it is important to consider the limitations of this project and ways to improve it.

Firstly, let us consider the materials employed. As explained above, the graphic analysis is made possible by the employment of medium hardness grade pencils. The use of pastels, markers and pens could not be included in the analysis. It would therefore be important to evaluate whether it is preferable to obtain a graphic investigation or one that considers the variety of material.

From a formal point of view, it is interesting to know how the map has been realized: whether an ordered way as been employed or a more arbitrary one, whether one has started from the top or from the bottom. It would equally be important to gather data concerning reactions during the drawing. It would be useful to have a chart with sections in which to annotate these points.

A last aspect concerns the analysis of the conversations. To obtain a precise analysis it should be possible to record the dialogues so these could be listened to again later, avoiding in this way the risk to lose important aspects or comments. The recording of conversations, though widely used in psychotherapy, requires special tools and above all a declaration of consent from the person interviewed. This could also be a way of sharing findings and information among members of an interdisciplinary group.

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# Into the Map: The Re-enactment of Experience in Sign Languages' Representation of Places of Origin

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**Abstract** Taking its cues from reflections of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and C. S. Peirce on the *map*, this chapter will focus on the interesting dialectic that characterizes our object of study, that is to say maps of places of origin. The chapter argues that the drawings collected in this study are constructed around a dialogue between a situated experience, realized by moving through a familiar space, and the representation of that experience which illuminates its objects even from an unbridgeable distance. This dialogue between immersion and distance – a theoretical cornerstone of our whole work – will be analyzed not only with regard to the spatial perspective chosen in the drawings, but also in the use of *signing space* in *sign languages*. When recounting the spaces they have drawn, signers have consistently changed their point of view: from a map-like description realized using their hands in order to describe spaces from above, to the adoption of a perspective from the inside in which the signers' whole body becomes the vehicle for signification. In particular, this change of viewpoint is at times realized through the so-called *Role Shift*, with which the signer adopts a first-person perspective internal to the event narrated. This spatial and enunciative shift allows the signer to interpret the role of himself once again: in this way, he re-enacts an agency directly performed in the places represented in the maps, retranslating them as a subjective experience.

## 1 Between Experience and Representation

Our work proposes and puts into practice a specific semio-philosophical theme, perhaps the semio-philosophical theme *par excellence*. By reflecting on the production and interpretation of maps of places of origin, the study uncovers an interesting relationship between experience and representation. This relationship appears to be closer and more complex in those “kinds of maps” our work focuses on, which represent a space that the subjects interviewed consider to be associated with their identity, than in canonical cartographical representations. This is because one's

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place of origin has a more existential connotation than other places. It is the place one comes from, the first place lived and seen from within, on which our gaze has often lingered and which is invested with an interrelated mix of memories and personal experiences. It is because of these characteristics that, as already noted, the drawings collected do not look like canonical maps but are more similar to *chorographs*.<sup>1</sup> The term indicates descriptions realized from a specific viewpoint, which retain traces of the ways in which a space has been experienced and of the habitual activities that took place there, often viewed through a veil of nostalgia. Our maps reveal then a twofold intention on the part of each author. On the one hand, to impose a personal semantics, in other words to show what that specific place “means for me” only, and not what it means in general, highlighting aspects that are not relevant for any other individual apart from the author. On the other hand, to transform the place of origin into a communicable, public space, and render it as comprehensible as possible through its representation.<sup>2</sup>

Given these premises, the chapter proposes an interpretation which develops from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Charles Sanders Peirce’s view of the *map*, our object of study. Taken together, their perspectives allow us to focus on the dialectic which is at center of our work, between lived experience – i.e. the experience realized by the act of living and moving in a place that is felt as one’s own – and the representation of that experience which, similarly to Peirce’s icon, is capable of shedding light on its object in spite of the unbridgeable distance from it.

The philosopher Merleau-Ponty refers to geographical maps in his introduction to *Phenomenology of Perception*, a work in which his phenomenology is applied to an experiential dimension that is in turn seen as a precondition, a founding moment of any pretence of distancing:

Scientific perspectives according to which I am a moment of the world are always naïve and hypocritical because they always imply, without mentioning it, that other perspective – the perspective of consciousness – according to which a world first arranges itself around me and begins to exist for me. To return to the things themselves is to return to this world prior to knowledge, this world of which knowledge always speaks, and this world with regard to which every scientific determination is abstract, signitive, and dependent, just like geography with regard to the landscape where we first learned what a forest, a meadow, or a river is. This movement is absolutely distinct from the idealist return to consciousness, and the demand for a pure description excludes the process of reflective analysis just as much as it excludes the process of scientific explanation (Merleau-Ponty 1945 [2012]:XXIII)

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach considers our *being-in-the-world* as a form of natural belonging and unconscious acceptance of the preliminary presence of things. This is described through the concept of “perceptual faith”: an existential approach that is prior to knowledge and to the dichotomous distinction between subject and object on which it is based, being connected instead to the originary dimension of a subject that lives and perceives the world through its body. In this respect the map symbolizes a derivative dimension that the author defines as “abstract”, “signitive” and “dependent”. This does not coincide with the concrete experience it

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<sup>1</sup> Bonazzi (Personal communication during one of our workshops).

<sup>2</sup> Pozzato (Personal communication during one of our workshops).

originates from, but represents a departure from it. As a symbol of a description that fails to fulfil its purpose, the map becomes a way to carry out a criticism of the dualistic and distancing approach characterising both science – which requires from observation an objectivity that can only be realized through a third-person approach towards the phenomena studied – and Husserl's reflexive phenomenology. It is in the latter that «the unnatural consciousness is [...] to the natural one as a map or a chart is to the territory in which we are immersed» (Lanfredini 2011:74, Author's translation). Its passage from the so-called natural attitude to the philosophical one – i.e. from a condition that implies direct experience to one that provides a reflection on it – is marked by a backward movement that leads to the loss of the fullness and effectiveness that characterizes the experience of things.<sup>3</sup> In this movement what is forever lost is the appearance of reality, the originary phenomenon with its immediate impact and impressionability. To experience something, maintains the French philosopher, is profoundly different from reflecting on that same experience.

According to Merleau-Ponty the object-map stands as a metaphor for a philosophical position that fails to accurately present an account of our being there, placed in the context in which we exist and belong. As he argues, the body's spatiality is a "situated" spatiality connected to a body that does not merely occupy a space, but "inhabits" it, by virtue of being dynamically and intentionally oriented towards it by means of the projects in which the organism is involved.<sup>4</sup> The place of origin – at the centre of attention of our work – is emblematic of this "inhabiting", and represents the first and fundamental experience of being and belonging to a space. Such a place is the epitome of a familiar environment, capable of responding naturally to our expectations, movements and to the practices that are born in it. This space coincides with a dimension that does not require any adjustments and in relation to which any distancing is secondary. The emphasis put by Pozzato on the close relationship between place of origin and mother tongue is significant in this respect: both are constantly experienced and cannot be either perceived or lived as something extraneous.

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<sup>3</sup>The natural attitude is characterized by a pragmatic and manipulatory behavior with respect to the world. According to Husserl, this is emblematic of being immersed in the world through an incorrect philosophical posture, based on the naïvely realistic assumption of the existence of reality without questioning the characteristics of its being there (Husserl 1952). This posture has to be necessarily substituted with a subjectivity that stands in front of the world and *does not take part in it*, reflecting on one's lived experience as absolute evidence in a Cartesian fashion. It is in this sense that the subject is qualified in the *Cartesian Meditations* in terms of an impartial and detached spectator (Husserl 1931).

<sup>4</sup>This dimension has been studied in the phenomenological idea of *one's own body*. In Merleau-Ponty's description, this concept emerges as a third way between the body as object (*Körper* intended as one thing among others in the physical space) and the represented, cognitively reproduced image of the same body. In fact, the human body transcends the dualistic opposition of object/representation in two respects: firstly, it is not concerned with the constitution of objects in space – the body is something through which we constitute the world, but that cannot be wholly constituted. Secondly, the body's reality cannot be determined once and for all, but can only be defined dynamically and circularly by the practical relationship that it establishes with the world. By describing the agent and the world that is acted upon as two poles of the same relationship—two dimensions that can be separated from each other only analytically, but that are in actual fact intimately intertwined—this notion allows us to focus on the idea of a perceived and lived body as a locus of interaction with the environment.

While in the work of Merleau-Ponty the reflexive approach symbolized by the map is criticized as inadequate, our research is instead based precisely on the “significative” and “dependent” character of the representation, and thus overturns the dysphoric value conferred by the philosopher to this object. We shall now focus our attention on the work of another author, Charles Sanders Peirce, who talks about this capacity of *standing for something else* as an essential condition of the sign (CP 2.273).<sup>5</sup> In his investigation of this matter, Peirce refers to the following specific case: «On a map of an island laid down upon the soil of that island there must, under normal circumstances, be some position, some point, marked or not, that represents *qua* place on the map, the very same point *qua* place on the island» (CP 2.230). This mental experiment points to the fact that, in this case, the map has at least one point that stands for itself, ceasing to be a sign that stands for something else.<sup>6</sup> In fact, if in this specific exception the physical overlapping of map and territory erases the interval between the representation and its object, the signic relationship is characterized precisely by a fundamental distance between them in which semiosis insinuates. The latter’s interpretative movement characterizes our cognitive approach to the world, the infinite generation of new signs (CP 1.339) that provides each time a new way to see the object, thereby expanding our knowledge of it (Eco 1976, 1986).

This *standing-for* relationship that features in all representations is particularly important with regard to the *iconic sign*, by virtue of its intrinsic qualities. This acts as a substitute for the object, allowing us to observe it directly: «For a great distinguishing property of the icon is that by the direct observation of it other truths concerning its objects can be discovered than those which suffice to determine its constructions» (CP 2.279). To paraphrase, the icon is not so much a sign that is constituted from well-known properties, similar to those of its objects and merely re-proposed. On the contrary, its distinctive ability is to reveal “unexpected truths”: the icon is a representation that manages to reveal exactly those properties that do not contribute to its edification, i.e. information about reality that only becomes present through the mediation of the sign.<sup>7</sup> It is in this perspective that Peirce develops his seminal studies on diagrams (Stjernfelt 2007), that he sees both as instruments of analysis – i.e. of explicitation and control of the internal logical passages

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<sup>5</sup>For this particular aspect of Peirce’s semiotics, which is cogent of our study, we refer to the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* that will be cited in the text by specifying the volume and the page. For the complete bibliographic information about this work, see the references.

<sup>6</sup>A similar cartographical paradox, which extends Peirce’s observations, can be found in the image formulated by Borges in his *Del rigor en la ciencia* (1958) – showing how the map represents an interesting object of reflection for philosophy and literature alike. In his work, Borges tells the story of a map that covers the dimensions of the Empire it illustrates. In this case, not just one, but all the points of the chart coincide with what they represent. Eco (1992) is just one among several scholars who have been fascinated by this narrative, and has discussed the possibility and the theoretical difficulties that a map represented in 1:1 scale can pose from a semiotic point of view.

<sup>7</sup>This mirrors Peirce’s idea of semiosis as a process which is essentially mediated, from which it derives that it is only through the intercession of the sign that reality becomes accessible. This vision stems from a profoundly anti-intuitive and anti-cartesian philosophy that has characterized the author’s gnoseology since the *New List* and his 1868–69 essays.

that characterize reasoning – and instruments for the realization and expansion of reasoning itself. Like maps, diagrams are physical realizations of a ‘form of relation’ (CP 4.530), by virtue of which one can experiment something that it becomes possible to observe directly.

Our analysis of maps brings to the surface precisely this dynamic. By asking to draw one’s place of origin, we have enacted that *be placed in front of* situation that is typical of all mechanisms of representation. It is precisely this condition – of seeing one’s place of origin on the map and manipulating its representation so that it is as faithful as possible to the memory of it – that enables us to re-live that place, and re-activate the experiences that are connected to it. The experiential dimension that is represented is recuperated and made available not only for one’s interlocutors, but also for oneself. This is because, as Peirce remarks, the representation illuminates the experience despite the unbridgeable distance from it – a distance which is made deeper by the fact that the experience belongs irretrievably to a past time. In our study, maps have therefore functioned as signs that can make something visible, and start a semiotic process which belongs to us as well as to those who have drawn the maps, and which possesses an emotive and cognitive value.

Given these premises, the exploration of places of origin conducted in our study is an attempt to describe the experience of a space as one’s *own*, always lived from the inside, and at the same time to examine the condition of *being in front of* this space which, through the representation of the space itself, enables a process of reinterpretation and understanding. From this perspective, maps cease to be something that is simply or primarily inadequate in respect to the landscape they represent to become an instrument that makes it possible to access and find that landscape again. In other words, by combining a phenomenological dimension and some aspects of semiotics, the approach used offers an utterly different interpretation of the *standing-for* relationship in representation: the substitution that this realizes is not only a synonym of a constitutive and necessary distancing, but also a *medium* for re-evocation and cognitive integration.

This dialectic between, on the one hand, the situated contiguity with a familiar place and, on the other, the ability to “fly over” it (Merleau-Ponty 1964) – thereby realizing an objectifying distance from it – has been further explored through an analysis of the ways in which the interviewed subjects have expressed it in the visual texts and discursive descriptions they realized. In particular, our study has focused on enunciations articulated in the visual-gestural modality of sign languages. These languages, in the same way as maps, provide a spatial representation that, as shown below, materially overlaps with the drawing, extending or completing its description. In order to discuss this phenomenon, some semiotic features of the use of space in sign languages will be described first, as these are necessary to achieve a better understanding of the expressive strategies used by the signers interviewed.

## 2 The Linguistic Use of Space in Sign Language

The status of sign languages as *proper languages* has been deeply recognized by contemporary research: these autonomous semiotic systems are in fact spontaneously created within a community, subject to diachronic and synchronic variations and able to realize fundamental cognitive and social functions. More in particular, sign languages are found to share the same structural regularities as spoken languages and possess the same characteristics of compositionality, productivity and high level of codification (Stokoe 1960; Klima and Bellugi 1979; Volterra 1987). Besides these shared features, these languages also have some peculiar characteristics: while on the expressive level spoken languages are articulated through what has been defined as the linear nature of the signifier (Saussure 1922 [1966]: 70), sign languages exploit the presence of the manual sub-components of their occurrences, as well as further signification vehicles. This separation is equivalent to that between *manual* and *non-manual* components. Since Stokoe's (1960) pioneering work, the former have been the subject of much discussion and further elaboration. These elements are equivalent to four distinct phonological categories or *formational parameters*, which form the basis of the regular articulation of these languages: orientation, configuration, place of the articulation and the movement of the hand (Fenlon et al. 2017). Alongside these components, studies have also shown the essential role of other parts of the body in the construction of the message, e.g. facial expressions, movements of the chest and orientation of the gaze.<sup>8</sup>

These elements are distributed and simultaneously used in what is defined as *signing space*, i.e. the concrete space of the enunciation, a tridimensional plane of the expression articulated in continuity with the reality that it represents.<sup>9</sup> As Wilcox states, signs are «objects which move about and interact with other objects» (Wilcox 1999:137): they are representations made of the same substance of the world they

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<sup>8</sup>In this respect, sign and spoken languages profoundly differ with regard to their medium of articulation: while spoken languages exploit a linear acoustic-vocal medium, sign languages are realised through what has been defined as a *visual-gestural* modality. Nonetheless, research on language production, evolution and acquisition is nowadays increasingly claiming the necessity to integrate a “narrow” view of human language with a multimodal approach based on the assumption that both spoken and sign languages use multiple channels of realization. Following this view, also those aspects, such as visual information, that are “particularly salient” in sign languages are present in the spoken ones thanks to the meaningful and systematic use of co-speech gestures in utterance construction (Vigliocco et al. 2014). These components, in addition with others, have been therefore proposed to be investigated as an integral part of what we consider to be *language*.

<sup>9</sup>As distinct from pantomime representations, through which it is possible to articulate any movement using any part of the body, in these languages acts of articulation are performed only within the so-called signing space, that occupies a circumscribed area. In LIS, the language considered in this study, such an area extends from the pelvis to the head. In the same way as other elements, this can also be explained by factors connected with motor perceptive possibilities – the signing space coincides with the space that can be most easily articulated by the signer, and the one that shows the maximum perceptual acuity on the part of the observer – as well as choices operated by the language system. This is confirmed by the fact that its extension changes along with a change of languages.

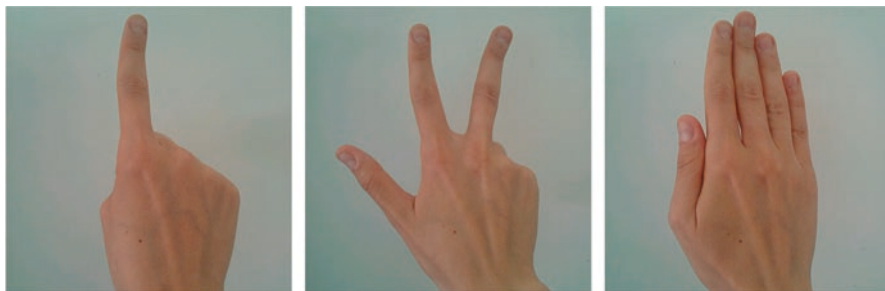
talk about, which are visible in the same way their object is visible, and structure a kind of language that is situated in space in the same way as the entities it mentions. The result of this fundamental contiguity is the strong iconic character of these languages, which have the ability to 'say' and 'show' at the same time (Cuxac 2000; Cuxac and Sallandre 2007), i.e. the capacity of figuratively illustrating the content of what they utter. In this way, sign languages demonstrate to possess the specific capacity that, according to Peirce, characterizes the icon (CP 2.282), the ability to *exhibit* information about its object.

In order to describe the way in which sign languages use space linguistically, scholars have talked about a *topological* or *syntactical use* (Klima and Bellugi 1979; Poizner et al. 1987). A *syntactical use* employs specific movements and articulations of spaces in order to communicate grammatical information without referring (through the expressive characteristic of what is uttered) to any real or imaginary 'state of things'.<sup>10</sup> A *topological use* of space realizes instead an isomorphic representation of the positions and movements used by the referents of the discourse. These two different strategies, as it has been suggested, should not be understood as reciprocally exclusive (Perniss 2012). On the contrary, they are communicative techniques that collaborate and overlap in the production of signs (Emmorey et al. 1995; Liddell 1995, 1998, 2003; Van Hoek 1996). In any case, their explanation helps us to understand the instruments used by the signers in the process of commenting and describing the maps they have drawn.

The analyses which have focused on the comparison between spoken languages and sign languages from the viewpoint of the representation of space have highlighted common aspects but also fundamental differences between them (Emmorey 2002; Talmy 2003; Petitta 2010). In spoken languages, the description of movement and location events is realized through an expressive sound substance made up of fixed particles, such as prepositions and affixes. In sign languages, the same description is realized through a linguistic use of the space itself that exploits elements that

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<sup>10</sup>In sign languages grammatical information is instantiated in the tridimensional dimension of space: verbal personal pronouns, for example, have a conventional localisation and their pairing with some verbs is realized by directing movement towards those points in space (Klima and Bellugi 1979; Emmorey 1996; Lillo-Martin and Meier 2011). However, it is possible to suggest that the realization of the first and the second personal pronouns depends on specific semiotic mechanism. In fact, while other pronouns are articulated through different points in space – whose codification is independent from the real position of the subjects they refer to – the linguistic articulation of the first and second personal pronouns depends on the real presence of the enunciator and the enunciatee in the *here* and *now* of the enunciation, and overlaps completely with the position of their bodies. The I of the signed discourse coincides with the corporeality of the signer that produces the text, and is nominated through a deictic act aimed at that very body that also coincides with the point in space from which the verbs having the signer as subject originate (Meir et al. 2007). The same process also characterizes the 'you'. In relation to this, it is possible to note the particular case of the third person: Benveniste's reference (1970) to Arabic grammar, in which the third person is indicated as "that who is absent" – precisely because, contrary to the first two, this is not part of the situation of discourse (Coquet 2007) – finds its corporeal realization in sign languages. The third person is in fact represented through a deictic act of the hand which points outside the I-you space, towards an external place where the enunciator's gaze, usually focusing on the enunciatee, is also directed.



**Fig. 1** LIS Examples of configurations G, 3, B (For a similar classification of the hand configurations, to which these letters and numbers are conventionally associated, see Radutzky 1992)

have a strong expressive character, such as *classifiers* (Emmorey 2003). These morphological particles usually occur in post-nominal position – in other words, after a certain entity has been represented through the sign that conventionally denotes it – making it possible to predicate something about it. In this way, *classifiers* make explicit the position (*Entity classifiers*), the form or the perimeter (*SASS, Size and Shape Specifiers*), or the action which can be directed towards it (*Handling classifiers*). When these elements are used in the description of space, the position and the movement of the signer's hand communicates information associated with the place or modality of the movement of the object, while the classifier – i.e. the configuration of the hand – provides its visual features. In LIS, for example, the hand configuration G, articulated through the extended index finger, is usually used to reproduce an entity with an elongated shape – a pen on a table or a person who approaches; configuration 3, with thumb, index finger and middle finger extended, is conventionally associated with the class of vehicles; these can be associated to this configuration or to configuration B – all fingers extended and joined together – which is also used to describe entities whose surface is flat (Fig. 1).

By using these elements an event is projected on the signing space, which becomes – in a similar way as the piece of paper – an expressive vehicle with which the signer can represent, we may say on a scale, a place. Studies have referred, in this case, to a *Diagrammatic Space*, because of the isomorphic and schematic mapping between the visual-spatial characteristics of the articulators and those of the place and events described that is realized there.

As can be seen from this brief presentation, our reflections here are inspired precisely by the differences or specificities of this semiotic system. Therefore, we shall focus on the strong evocative power of these languages, that have the potential of realizing vivid linguistic representations full of sensuous details.

## 2.1 Perspectives

Our research interests are similar to those of Emmorey and his colleagues (2000) – although their goals were different from ours. Their research work consisted in asking some American hearing and signers to remember and describe a map so that their interlocutors could re-construct it. This study, which highlights that sign languages *represent space through space itself*, focused on an aspect that is particularly relevant for our work. According to these scholars, the description of a place in visual texts as well as verbal ones always implies a perspective. In oral texts this can be of two kinds: it can coincide with a *route* vision, in which the enunciator is completely immersed in an environment that is described in terms of left, right etc.; or it can be realized through a *survey* perspective, in which the enunciator delineates positions using more objective reference points, such as north, south, east and west<sup>11</sup>: «A route perspective corresponds to experiencing an environment from within, by navigating it, and a survey perspective corresponds to viewing an environment from a single outside point at a height, such as a tree or a hill» (Emmorey et al. 2000:158).

With regard to sign languages, Emmorey and his colleagues have distinguished two uses of *sign space*, two different ways of structuring the relationship between a point of view and an environment. These consist, as stated before, of the *Diagrammatic Space*, a “map-like” model that describes a place as if it was in front of the enunciator – who in turn considers the environment “looking at it as an object” – and a *Viewer Space*, that «reflects the individual’s current 3-D view of the environment» (*Ivi*: 159), a point of view internal to the place described which surrounds the signer.<sup>12</sup> In this last case, the location of the objects described reflects the one which the enunciator would observe if he/she were in the place narrated. As a consequence, the authors suggest, this modality tends to be used «[...] when signers conceptualize the environment as present» (*Ivi*: 169).

Interestingly, the distinction of spatial points of view in the above-mentioned study has found a counterpart in the way in which our signers have linguistically described their drawings. While commenting on the spaces they have drawn, they systematically changed their perspective, shifting from a description from above to one from within. One of the most important differences with Emmorey’s study, however, is that in our case the map is not a representation of *any place* given to the interviewed, but it is a chart that he/she has conceived and constructed by himself/herself, in order to recount personal memories and events. It is precisely for this reason that, as mentioned in the introduction, the individuals’ deep involvement in their task – not only during the drawing of the map, but also “a posteriori” through

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<sup>11</sup>The authors here refer to the following volumes: Perrig and Kintsch (1985), Taylor and Tversky (1992a, b, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>The first can be paired with the *Token Space* Liddell (1995) has talked about, to Schick (1990) *Model Space* and to Perniss (2012) *Observer Perspective*. The second is parallel with Liddell (1995) *Surrogate Space*, Schick (1990) *Real World Space* and Perniss (2012) *Character Perspective*.



their verbal comments – represents a central aspect of our work. Faced with the task of representing their place of origin, the participants have tended to build further narrative lines, in order to provide a deeper picture of what they were telling. To speak of one's place of origin in fact is like speaking or reflecting on oneself, intertwining processes of representation and of identity-making (see Mazzeo, chapter “[Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis](#)”, this volume). It is exactly for these reasons that our maps appear to be, at the same time, subjective products and objectifications capable of generating new discourses inspired by their observation. In our study, the enunciator's involvement in the realization of a spatial representation – either by using signs or by drawing – overlaps and forms a dialogue with the attachment that a subject feels towards a place that, one way or another, he perceives as particularly important.

On this basis, a group of deaf subjects has been asked to draw a “kind of map” of a place which they thought had been significant for the formation of their identity. These subjects, who use the *Italian Sign Language* (LIS) to communicate, have been left free to realize a visual text in which, however, the explicit point of reference needed to be their home. Later, they were asked to describe and comment on this place in their natural language.<sup>13</sup>

### 3 Past and Present

As noted above, in general our aim has been to focus on the representative modalities of the place of origin as *one's own space*. In an era characterized by migrations on a mass scale, such a place can easily cease to be *one's own*: either because of necessity or as the result of a spontaneous decision, it can become a space that is ‘other’, different from the environment in which one lives, works or studies. An important issue for the history and culture of deaf people in Italy, which contributes to our analyses but that can only be mentioned briefly here, is the abandonment of one's place of origin to attend special schools. For decades, schooling for deaf children has been provided by special institutions (often religious ones) different from the ones attended by other children.

The years spent in special schools have marked the lives of a lot of deaf children and adolescents. Very often these schools were located far away from their places of origin, leading to a difficult separation from the familiar environment. At the same time, these schools became important aggregation centers, and it was precisely there that, thanks to spontaneous and continuous communicative exchanges, sign languages as we know them today developed. One of the maps we have collected (Fig. 2) was drawn by L., a gentleman of Sicilian origin who, like several others of

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<sup>13</sup>The maps have been collected in ENS (*Ente Nazionale Sordi*) in Florence in May 2015. The instructions for the authors of the map have been produced in sign language by the author of this chapter who has a third level competence in LIS. For details on the modality of the survey see the [introduction](#) in this volume.



**Fig. 2** Map drawn by L.

the same generation, left his own village when he was very young to attend one of the above-mentioned schools.

L. has chosen to represent as his place of origin not his home in Sicily, which he left when he was 8 years old—possibly because it was difficult for him to remember the details of that place – but his home in Tuscany where he moved with his parents in 1961, soon after attending a special school. While commenting on his drawing, L. explained that he chose to represent this place because it is the place where he lived with his family and also for the beauty of the surrounding landscape. L. described nostalgically the home and the tending of the vegetable garden; his story has focused at length on the moon, which he decided to draw because of the brightness of its light in the Sienese countryside.

Beginning in the 1970s, deaf people were given the right to attend regular schools. This was the result of a long process that aimed to achieve a real *integration* in education.<sup>14</sup> This process led to a progressive desertion of special schools, as in the vast majority of cases parents preferred to see their children integrated in a normal schooling system (Bosi et al. 2007). The other two cases presented here show a different experience from the one we have just described: these involve two young deaf girls that recently left their place of origin for reasons related to work and study. We decided to focus on these two cases because their maps – along with the

<sup>14</sup>This process was finally codified with Law 517 dated 1977; it was later perfected with Law 104 in 1992. Its aim was to systematically promote the right to school and university education. These legislative acts aimed at equal opportunities and accessibility to education, also provide by the introduction of specialized professionals such as Communication Assistants, as well as interpreting services.

points of view verbally expressed during the interviews – provide a connection with some of the above-mentioned theoretical issues. The dialectic between a situated vision, that observes a place from within because it feels it belongs to it, and a representative distancing of place – an attempt to look at it from above – can be seen in the various narrative strategies used by the subjects in their drawn and signed representations.

## 4 Being There

M. is a girl who originally comes from Molise. She now lives and works in Florence. She has represented as her place of origin her village in the province of Isernia (Fig. 3), more specifically drawing the entrance to her home (on the right in the illustration), the main street, the village's square on the left. These elements can be identified thanks to the verbal indications “BAR” and “VIA ROMA”, together with the toponyms at the bottom of the drawing.

As can be noted, from a geographical point of view this map is reminiscent of an abstracted model, characterized by a rather neutral birds-eye view similar to a zoomed satellite image. During the verbal representation other important details have emerged: when asked to provide a narrative of the place drawn, M. described



Fig. 3 Maps drawn by M.



**Fig. 4** Map drawn by F.

her home and the streets through what we have called a *Diagrammatic Space*. In other words, even during the discursive phase, her perspective has remained completely external to the place represented. The verbal text and the drawn text are in this case characterized by expressive continuity.

More particularly, her hands have “told” and specified the respective position of buildings and routes; the articulators have filled the drawing with signs, extending the expressive space and perfecting the narration. M., for example, described the frequent traffic of cars: employing classifier 3, she placed both her hands exactly on the cars drawn, moving them in opposite directions to represent their movement in the two-way street. Interestingly, M. has placed herself in this objectified space, using – as she had done with the cars – an *Entity* classifier: configuration V, articulated in LIS through index and middle finger extended downwards and usually used to represent a person. With this expressive strategy, one’s own position is enunciated like all the other elements in the map: one’s own *being-there* is somehow kept at a distance in the representation, realising, as suggested above, a three-dimensional development of the material support drawn. This has, however, the characteristics of oral enunciation, in that it does not leave any traces of the movement of the hand in the air, except for the transitional ones.

An alternative case is represented by the map produced by F, a girl that has drawn his place of origin in Sicily, which she left to attend university in Milan (Fig. 4). In this case, as in the previous analyses, much attention has been devoted to her verbal commentary.

Besides her graphic competence – acquired during her university studies – it is possible to note an increasing involvement on the part of the enunciator towards the space enunciated. The point of view is entirely internal, indeed it is so situated that what could be seen as the focal point of the representation – her home – is not there. This corresponds to the blank space in the drawing, indicated by a perimeter that surrounds the observer with the writing “CASA MIA” (“MY HOUSE”). The home therefore coincides with the point from which our perspective opens: as the body, according to Merleau-Ponty, is not comparable to the objects that surrounds it but coincides with an implied presence that is constant and hidden at the same time (Merleau-Ponty 1945), the home opens itself towards a horizon, it “sees” but it is not seen. The representation of the lived experience is in this case heightened, as is also the level of personalization.

In her comments F. has pointed out that the perspective she chose corresponds to the back of her home, in particular the view from the balcony where as a child she used to watch other children playing, as well as the places where she herself used to play.<sup>15</sup> It is precisely with regard to these spaces that her linguistic strategy has changed, employing different perspectives. Initially F. commented on her drawing by employing a strategy that could be considered similar to the cinematographic “establishing shot” (see D’Armenio, chapter “[Intermedial Editing in the Representations of Places of Origin](#)”, this volume), describing the area around her home from above. The employment of a *Diagrammatic Space*, through which one can easily localise all that has been drawn, causes a change of perspective that can be described as a sort of step back from a point of view engaged in the drawing. At this point of the description, F. has often used *Entity classifiers*, arranging in the space in front of her the home, the countryside around it, and the parking area, in which she has put the cars side by side, using configuration 3 analysed above.

When she starts to describe the group of trees next to her home (Fig. 5), which usually served as her playground, the person interviewed shifts from a description of space to a re-evocation of what she used to do in this space. In this moment, F.’s explanation focuses on the games and routes which, in her memory, are closely associated with that place. Precisely at this point F. has changed the perspective of her narrative, and has started to use an internal point of view through the technique of the *Role Shift* (Bahan and Petitto 1980; Lee et al. 1997; Lillo-Martin 1995, 2012; Meier 1990; Padden 1986, 1990) or *Transfert de personne* (Cuxac 2000; Cuxac and Sallandre 2007).

Through this technique the producer of a discourse assumes the role of the referent of the discourse itself. For instance, when describing a dialogue the signer can impersonate more than one character, and express in the first person all the different internal viewpoints of the narration. The beginning of a mechanism of *débrayage* (Greimas and Courtés 1979, Engl. Transl. 1982)<sup>16</sup> is signalled through a codified

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<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that, only thanks to a comparison with Google Maps F. realized that all the area in the upper part on the right – i.e. the countryside – has now disappeared as a result of recent urbanization.

<sup>16</sup> Greimas’ semiotics has discussed the complex phenomenon of enunciation by borrowing and developing a concept that belongs to Jakobson’s (1957) linguistics, i.e. the idea of *shifter*. This category refers to all those grammatical elements that, like the personal pronouns, show the

**Fig. 5** Map drawn by F.,  
detail



process that employs *body markers* such as, for example, the interruption of the visual contact with the enunciator and the slight change in the position of the body.<sup>17</sup> By employing this strategy, the enunciator “becomes” the person about whom he/she is talking: the key point of our reflection is that, in the narration of one’s place of origin, such a person is often the narrator himself/herself. By employing Greimas’ categories, our study suggests that this process realizes a *temporal and spatial débrayage*, i.e. the explicitation of a *not-now* and *not-here* coinciding with the

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presence of the subject in his/her enunciations. This concept has been developed with reference to the dynamics between two fundamental moments: the *débrayage*, intended as dis-junction and separation between the *I-here-now* dimension of the enunciation and the one of the utterance, and the following moment that sees a return or *embrayage* (Bertrand 2000).

<sup>17</sup>A similar corporeal dynamic, connected with the relationship between the direction of the gaze and the modality of the enunciation, has also been noted in studies of visual semiotic (Schapiro 2002).

places and moments enunciated in the drawing. This is however accompanied by an actorial *embrayage*: in effect, a return to oneself.

As a matter of fact, the *Role Shift* corresponds not just to a “quoted-signing mechanism” (Taub 2001), used to report a direct discourse when the enunciator is different from the narrator-signer, but is also employed to represent concrete events or actions narrated from the point of view of the agent or patient. What is presented here therefore is not just a *citational dominion*, but also an *action dominion* (Mazzoni 2008). Even if the body of the signer is used as a vehicle of the actions – rather than the discourse – of a third person, the indicators that signal the presence of this enunciative shift are the same as in the *citational dominion*. This identity points to a central aspect for this study, namely, the relationship between the representative dimension and the experiential-agentive one which exists in sign languages: «the substantial equivalence between “saying” and “acting”, [...] reflects a certain overlapping between action and locution, between *verba dicendi* and *verba agendi*, since in sign languages “saying” is also “acting”» (*Ivi*:187, translation by the author).

When recounting solitary activities or games with friends, F. has re-created exactly this dynamic. The spatial transfiguration coincides in this case with a modification of the enunciative modality, as it is with respect to the impersonated referent that the narrative *setting* shifts (*Ivi*: 65). From a “map-like” representation, where the map was situated in the signing space in front of F., space became a representative dimension in which she was immersed: within her enunciation, the subject “ends up” assuming the role of herself. In particular, by using this strategy, F. adopted her own point of view to discursively communicate and illustrate in the present an act that she had performed in the past. In other words, she shifted from a narration that was somehow detached, in which she expressed something that sounded like “here I used to do this” or “Here I played in this way” to a re-evocation of these same acts that is like saying “I do this”, or “I play in this way”. That “I”, which coincides with the body of the enunciator, represents *that same body* in another moment and place, and acts now as if it was in that moment again. In particular, F. re-enacted her action of penetrating into the woods and exploring them – which in the drawing she simply traced with a pencil – with the movement of her chest, the act of moving plants with her hands, turning her gaze right and left, in this way re-evoking what she felt in that precise moment of her life. For this reason, unlike the examples illustrated so far, it is no longer the configuration of the hand, but that of the whole of the body that becomes a vehicle of signification.

## 5 Final Considerations

By using interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches, our study analyzes the representation of a particular and significant object: one’s place of origin. In this chapter, phenomenological and semiotic theories have been used to show that maps of places of origin enact an interesting and peculiar dynamic. On the one hand, such

maps are drawings “for myself”, i.e. an explicitation of an intimate lived experience, connected to a place that can be defined as the one’s *own place par excellence* (Merleau-Ponty 1945). On the other hand, they are drawings that, as representations, are essentially for “the other”. With this respect, the study has noted that in the dimension of “the other” are included not just those who have commissioned the drawing of the maps, those who, following Eco’s idea of a *Model Reader* (1979), can be defined as *Model Observers*, but also the author of the map. The latter is in fact the first reader of his/her own work, which is created from a past lived experience now irrecoverable (Vitale 2005). On this basis, our analysis has shown that maps can be explorative instruments, capable of shedding light on their object despite the distance separating them from it, in this way activating a semiotic-interpretative process that makes that experience available once again.

This dialectic between an originary adherence and a representative distance has found concrete realisation in our analysis of the way in which the relationship between the point of view and the environment – characterizing every spatial representation – is structured. The reflection on the *map* as a semiotic-phenomenological object has been developed by focusing on another modality of representation, i.e. the verbal realisations of deaf subjects who use the *Italian Sign Language*. By examining the capacity of this kind of language «to show, illustrate and demonstrate while telling» (Cuxac and Sallandre 2007:15), we have shown the ways in which signers’ discourses complement the representations drawn in the maps. While describing places, routes and events, sign systems employ the same three-dimensional reality they talk about. More specifically, such systems make use of the same dimension in which the dynamic contact between the subject and his/her world takes place. Based on these premises, our study has suggested that the relationship between experience and representation – on which we have focused our attention – emerges more forcefully in sign languages. In the process of describing the places they had drawn, signers have in fact consistently changed their point of view, choosing either a distant perspective with regard to the place recounted, or an internal one situated in that same place. In this last case, in order to narrate the way in which they have moved through a particular route, or played a certain game, the signers have enacted a transfiguration of the representation that is both spatial and enunciative. The space of the representation ceases to be placed *in front of* the signer and is no longer described by an external narrator, but becomes something in which the narrator is immersed: he/she ends up “inside the map”. In the same way, the enunciator is also “inside his/her discourse”, assuming the role of the referent who is talked about. In this way, he/she ‘becomes’ himself/herself again, in the specific space and in those specific moments represented in the drawing. By focusing on these elements we have noted how, when employing this perspective, signers enact a proper corporeal re-evocation of the experiences lived in their places of origin. In other words, what has been objectified in the drawn representation is enacted in the first person once again, and re-translated as a subjective experience.



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# The Role of Perception in the Representation of Places of Origin: Some Remarks on Movement

Giulia Nardelli

**Abstract** This article analyses some aspects of the representation of movement in maps of places of origin. Some reflections on the nature of mapmaking have provided a starting point for constructing a theoretical discourse that shows how sensorimotor memory plays a fundamental role in the re-construction of place. Given that perception is crucial in the elaboration of experience, our survey interrogates its importance in relation to representation. The discussion will focus on the following interrelated aspects:

1. The way perception is considered as a sense-making process within an interdisciplinary debate that focuses on the complexity of experiential dimension, with particular reference to some theories on the relation between perception, action and expression.
2. The way sensory motor “knowledge” has played a crucial part in the way authors have realized their maps.
3. How lived experience in places acts as memory devices for graphic representations by both naive and expert draftsmen.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first one will be devoted to articulating theoretical and epistemological issues, in particular providing reflections about maps employed in the analysis of the drawings. The second part investigates the way in which perception and activities in places play a role in individuals’ verbal and graphic representations. Finally, we will describe how all this reveals mechanisms of construction of subjectivities in and through these representations, paying particular attention to the relationship between subjectivity and socio-cultural practices.

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## 1 Representing and Sensing Place of Origin. An Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to investigate the role and representative modalities of the perceptive and sensorimotor components in the representation of places of origin. More precisely, we are interested in exploring motor and perceptive experiences in places as motivation for the representations of the draftsmen.

The sensorimotor and perceptive elements constituting some maps have encouraged us to investigate various aspects that are intimately connected, but whose relation initially appeared obscure. Perceptions, “motor” habits and situated memory have required an in-depth and coordinated study in order to interpret deeply these representations. It is important to point out that this quality has nothing to do with a mere identification of objects and positions in the past, as it is the product of a deep subjective integration. This presupposes something similar to what in Calvino’s writings has been defined as *ekos logos* (Antonello 1998), a discourse that begins in one’s home. These representations are founded on a *topology*, a structure, and a *cartography*, a tale, and for this reason they cannot be seen solely as the results of explicit graphic strategies, but as emanations of a set of rules that form their underlying structure.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the survey and the discussions with the authors of maps have shown that the representation of movement is of primary importance for reflection on subjectivities.

## 2 The Map and Its Motivations. Notes on Perception and Mapmaking

In discussing some problematic aspects of images, Ernst Gombrich considers the case of maps. He focuses in particular on the fine line between objectivity and appearance in visual processes, that is to say between what we really see and the knowledge we superimpose to what we see. As Gombrich writes: «Not only it is hard to overcome the nearly automatic coupling of eye movement and interest, it is harder to separate now what we remember, anticipate or really see» (Gombrich 1982a, b: 180).

In this respect, maps can be considered particularly pertinent objects. On the one hand, «maps are normally designed to impart information about the invariant features of an area, in other words they leave ‘appearances’ on one side», on the other «[...] handling a map, we are intent on the veridical perception of what is there on the piece of paper [...]» (ivi: 183). Maps are meant to provide indications; maps are represented before the navigation of a territory, but they are continuously subjected

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<sup>1</sup>It is significant that critics have pointed out “a cartographical vein” in Calvino’s works. Here, homes and places of origin represent a central theme. Exemplary in this respect is *The Road of San Giovanni*. On this, see *The Traveller in the Map* (1984/2013), some reflections on the exhibition *Cartes et figures de la terre* (1980, Centre Pompidou), where Calvino emphasized the relationship between a «cartography which looks elsewhere» and one that «concentrates on familiar territory» (Calvino 1984/2013: p. 23). On this, see also Pierantoni (1998).

to comparisons with what we see according to what we are looking for in that specific situation. According to Gombrich, this problem can be summed up by the relation between the natural and the conventional in maps, an issue that «goes back to Plato's *Cratylus*, which considers language in the light of an issue that preoccupied the Ancient Greeks – the problem of what exists by nature and what by convention» (*ibidem*). Gombrich's solution to this issue is: signs on maps are not necessarily iconic – in other words they are not faithful representations. And yet, these signs are not arbitrary – as they are subject to criteria of accuracy.

This issue for Gombrich is not dissimilar to the *debate on iconism*,<sup>2</sup> a theoretical controversy which was central for semiotics in those years. This debate revolved around the nature of the so-called iconic signs – that is to say those signs that have a resemblance to what they represent – most immediately images. The final part of this debate appeared in *Kant and the Platypus* (1997) by Umberto Eco. Though this work was written in a cultural climate completely different compared with the one in which this issue began to be discussed, Eco's observations and references are particularly relevant for our analysis. As Polidoro notes (2015), this debate thrived in the newly-born visual society of the 1970s, and, for a long time, it was articulated through the dichotomy between the natural and the conventional. The same debate on the relationship between sign and world re-emerged in the 1990s and was transformed into a debate on language inspired by cognitive linguistics: language was seen as rooted in the corporeal and the experiential, hence the idea of *motivation* gained a central role. To posit that language was motivated meant to re-introduce the idea that perception and corporeality have an important influence on language. All this strongly influenced semiotic studies in those years,<sup>3</sup> and brought back to attention fundamental philosophical problems – such as that of referent – that remain central in the relationship between sign and world, representation and perceptive experience. In his discussion on maps, Gombrich raises a similar question and wonders how could a representation based on conventional instruments and acquisitions resembles what it represents and, at the same time, retains aspects that allow direct encounter and situated use.

In the case of maps of places of origin, this discussion is even more relevant, for these maps are characterized by a peculiar productive and interpretative character. These maps do not have to follow criteria of veracity, because they are not meant for practical navigation. Therefore, they force those who draw them to carry through a choice of representative solutions that depend solely on the personal relation the authors have with the place they draw. Drawing these maps implies a translation of experience, a process in which the production and the interpretation of signs go hand in hand. The person who draws acts as a *bricoleur* who employs various materials<sup>4</sup> that provide a bedrock from which memories, knowledge and sensations of

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<sup>2</sup>For a summary of this debate that centers attention on Eco's contribution, see Polidoro (2015). Gombrich's studies ever since the publication of *Art and Illusion* strongly influenced Eco's work on iconism.

<sup>3</sup>Besides *Kant and the Platypus*, these ideas strongly influenced Violi's *Meaning and Experience* (1997). On the relation between perceptive experience and language, common themes and dialogues between the two see Cacciari (eds.) (1991).

<sup>4</sup>On this aspect, see Enzo D'Armenio's chapter "[Intermedial Editing in the Representations of Places of Origin](#)", in this volume.

and in that place emerge in unison. The question is therefore to what extent are maps of places of origin motivated by the components of the experience of the place itself? In what way do perception, action, sensomotricity in places of origin “survive”, condition memory and determine the final result? What are the modalities through which these aspects re-emerge in maps? The discussion of these issues will shed some light on what the personal cartographical language preserves and reveals about the act of exploring a territory as a primary and fundamental stage in the process of learning to live in a place.

Starting from an attempt to interrogate the fundamental components of perception and action in experience, we will now consider some possible methodologies chosen from a wide interdisciplinary context. All these share a similar idea according to which the experiential dimension is complex but not «stratified» (Dreon 2007), as if perception was a sort of primary stage associated with the gathering of sensible objects, that, during a second stage, will be elaborated through superior cognitive systems. In the following paragraphs, we will present key ideas taken from some of these theoretical approaches that will provide a background for the analysis that will follow.

## 2.1 *Perception and Action*

The connection between perception and action has initially been explored in anthropological studies. More particularly, Charles Goodwin in one of his most famous studies on the visual has emphasized this connection in relation to modes of visualization connected to maps. In these studies, visualization depends on pertinent choices connected to action; this led Goodwin to conclude that «perception and action are inextricably linked» (Goodwin 1995: 256).<sup>5</sup> According to this study, users only partially make use of the resources provided by maps, which are always interpreted and negotiated.<sup>6</sup> More recently Goodwin’s arguments have been reintroduced in studies on theories of perception and, by particular, in the “sensorimotor” approach<sup>7</sup> (cfr. Jacob 2015). This approach, initially developed by Alva Noë and Kevin O’Reagan (2001) (and later developed further by Noë (2004)), has evolved into a paradigm that has redefined the role of action in cognitive life, providing an understanding of vision as «a mode of exploration of the world that is mediated by knowledge of what we call sensorimotor contingencies» (Noë and O’Reagan 2001: 740).

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<sup>5</sup> Goodwin’s works are taken up by Ingold (2007), who shows that this connection points to an even stronger one between map and tale.

<sup>6</sup> What follows are Gombrich ideas on the relationship between the active and situated nature of the gaze and the way maps work: «We do not want them to function only in peep-boxes for monocular viewing from a fixed point, but to convey their information much as maps do to the moving and scrutinizing eye. [...]» (Gombrich 1982a, b: 210–211).

<sup>7</sup> This point was already forcefully made in *The Embodied Mind* (Varela et al. 1991), that introduced the idea of *enaction*.

Perception and action are therefore strictly related. As noted in *Action and Perception* (Noë 2004), to accept this perspective means to consider visual processes as explorative activities. This is reinforced by Merleau-Ponty's metaphor of the "haptic gaze" that provides the starting point for the critique of the *snapshot conception of vision* and mobilizing ideas of the visual process. For these authors, the role of perception is not to build static simulacra of the world that are later re-elaborated and selected through different cognitive levels. On the contrary, perception alone provides an idea of the situation gained through the exploration of the environment that shows only the relevant aspects for experiential purposes. First of all, therefore, perception is considered *as* action. The second point concerns more closely the influence of action on perception. Motor knowledge allows a recuperation of the dynamic relationship between organism and environment, drawing attention onto an individual's interaction with the world.<sup>8</sup> Vision therefore depends on the possibility to act in the world based on actions (present and past) in place, hypothesizing in this way that these two factors are interdependent.

## 2.2 Perception and Expressiveness

To think of perception as a fully active process means to refuse the idea that this is simply about sensorial structuring. It is well known that this point of view was introduced by *Gestaltpsychologie*: given the assumption that perceptive phenomena can be described independently of physical space, these cannot be reduced to the result of a mere contact between individuals and place.

This is the premise of all studies on expressiveness seen as fundamental dimension of perceptive life that reinforces not only the idea of an autonomous perception organized around its own dynamics, but also of perception as a creative force of a value that is always subjectively integrated. These characteristics have re-emerged in the recent proposal for the development of a semantic theory of information in the perception domain (Albertazzi et al. 2010). This theory strongly supports the idea that perceptual information is characterized by expressive properties, and not by something already present in the external environment. This approach provides a clear distinction between *perception* and *recognition of objects* and notes that «it is mostly perception of shapes and meanings that are at the basis of the construction of perceptual "objects"» (Albertazzi and Pinna 2010: 288). By way of perception we do not provide an answer to an external stimulus, we rather construct meaning. And, in fact, if what we see as the phenomenal world was the result of a simple reactivation, we would not be able to reconstitute a continuity linking different perceptual events.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>These studies are influenced by the ecology of perception whose most complete definition can be found in James Gibson's theories.

<sup>9</sup>Perceived space and represented space provide two continuous levels. Gert van Tonder and Dhanraj Vishwanath (2015) have connected this to creation; they have stated that «any human-made creation therefore reflects back upon perception, offering potential insight into the constructs that resonate with the internal organization of percepts» (van Tonder and Vishwanath 2015: 863).



Some basic assumptions informing this critical perspective were presented by Rudolf Arnheim in a study that was specifically dedicated to maps. Of all the different kinds of so-called “iconic” information that maps can provide, Arnheim believes that those concerning «the dynamic expression of colors and shapes» (Arnheim 1976: 195) are particularly important. Receptivity to dynamic quality should not be seen as accessory («an idle playing with geographic imagery, a distraction from serious learning» (ivi: 196)), rather it should be placed at the heart of the perception of maps, as these qualities represent «the very vehicle of learning, and they provide visual roots for knowledge» (ibidem). Only when we begin to understand that maps are not an assemblage of forms, but complex configurations of visual forces, will we be able to connect knowledge that is derived from maps with other kind of information, that is to say, to translate «the relevant aspects of the message into the expressive qualities of the medium» (ibidem). Arnheim does not provide a clear separation between reflection on the perception of maps and of *mapmaking*. He posits that the work of generalization implied in mapmaking goes well beyond the combination of single objects and reference points (an operation that implies choice and rejection of details) and concerns the creation of a new pattern, that is to say a fundamental operation of “creation of continuity”.

### 2.3 Perception, Movement, Memory

Though so far we have only considered studies on visual perception, references to actions and expressiveness in this paragraph have provided an indication of the complexity of the perceptual phenomena. In this regard, it is interesting to note that some studies have defined the sense of movement (*kinesthesia*) as a sixth sense (Berthoz 1997)<sup>10</sup> impossible to separate from perceptual activity in general. The introduction of movement as sense widens the meaning of the word “sense” as it refers to a multi-sensorial dimension and stresses the non-localized nature of senses that, in their interrelation, reveal their necessary connection with action. According to an example provided by Berthoz, distance is mainly a combination and a calibration of visual and motor operations, where it is the intention of movement itself that creates what we normally call sensorial signals. By rejecting the idea that perception is an interpretation of sensorial messages, Berthoz in his study *Le Sens du mouvement* (1997) sees this as an activity that functions in relation to a hypothesis. It is evaluative, selective and it anticipates and predicts actions; it arouses from a comparison of states (both real and expected) that are analysed for coherence and unity. It is pre-

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<sup>10</sup>Berthoz’s project is inspired by Merleau-Ponty philosophy (particularly by *Phénoméologie de la perception* (1945) and those works included in the *Résumés* of his courses at the Collège de France (1968)). Berthoz’s position is connected in particular with Merleau-Ponty’s lectures in 1953 on perception and movement (now in 2010).

cisely the active aspect – expressed by the sense of anticipation and prediction – that is crucial for an understanding of topographic memory. This, according to Berthoz, is procedural, that is to say mainly founded on the continuous succession of local visions and movements.<sup>11</sup> The sense of navigation – which according to Berthoz is the ability to find one’s way – depends on vestibular memory of movement and not on position: *memory of space is memory of movement in space*. As noted by Berthoz, this does not mean that the brain keeps a cartographical memory of places; on the contrary, it means that this kind of memory is of relational nature and intrinsically dependent on movement, which in turn provides continuity, as also demonstrated by the phenomenon of *remplissage*. As in the famous case of Marcel Proust’s *madeleine*, the propensity of reconstructing events, gestures, words starting from some clues is produced by the tendency to discover coherence and therefore to re-construct whole configurations. This perspective unifies sensoriality and motricity in perception, as noted by Noë and O’Reagan (2001), and adds to this the constitutive expressivity of all perceived phenomena.<sup>12</sup> All of this finds confirmation in Merleau-Ponty’s formulation that «the visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being» (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 124) and produces heuristic consequences precisely in the act of remembering place. This act, in fact, is indistinguishable from our sense of position in place and the way we move within it.

### 3 Poetics of Movement

In paragraph 2 we have emphasized how movement reveals the complexity of memory at a deep level – namely, the one of perception. In this part, we will show how this characterizes representations of places of origins. In this section we will especially focus our attention on three points: (1) a detailed exploration of sensorial and motor motivation that, as we have hypothesized, has spurred some of the drawings; (2) the ways in which movement is represented; (3) the relationship between the representation of movement and construction of subjectivity. In relation to the first point, we are going to provide some information concerning the positioning of the analysis, the aims of this study and cases analysed.<sup>13</sup> The examples used are drawings made by *naïve* authors. The criteria for the choice of the drawings were determined by the conversations about maps with their authors and the comparison between the drawing and Google Maps’ representations of the same place. What has emerged in these conversations are not only descriptions of the drawings (a sort of

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<sup>11</sup>This succession presents some errors, if compared to reality. This issue has been studied by Tversky (2000, 2009), who, after noting these systematic errors, concluded that individuals do not register all the details of a place, but look for coherence in/of navigational space.

<sup>12</sup>See works illustrated in paragraph 2.2.

<sup>13</sup>Concerning the description of this study, the kind of survey and the composition of the corpus see Pozzato’s, chapter “Introduction”, in this volume. The notes presented here concern the segmentation of our research work that depend on the general methodological frame of the whole research.

*ekphrasis*), but also some reflections on their motivations that have provided useful details on modalities of observation and fruition. This new level of analysis has made it possible to add yet another dimension that concerns the practice and realization of the drawings.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, we have included representations by more graphically competent authors in order to explore the way movement is realized through more established and conventional practices.

### 3.1 *Places, Routes and Paths: Practices and Perception*

As aforementioned at the beginning of this chapter, the drawings contain some characteristics typical of cartographical *mapmaking*; however, they also show some differences with these because of the complex relation that the subjects/authors have to their place of origin. The tension between the objective and subjective represents one of the main aspects of these hybrid objects. On the one hand, the authors of these drawings look for an inspiring model – a representation they can use for comparative purposes. On the other, they also try to find something that can give voice to the sense of intimacy they feel with their place of origin. On several occasions this mixture of opposed tendencies has produced extremely subjective and imaginative drawings. Still, this has become clear only through some visual clues in the maps, or a conversation about the drawings. Let us consider the map of E. (Fig. 1), a student that had to move away from his place of origin and who has drawn his home village: Piane d'Archi. There are several interesting elements here: firstly, the map shows a complex morphological representation and various attempts of multi-sensorial representation of the landscape, particularly, though not solely, in relation to the sound, movement and quantification. Impressions of movement (as in those cases where declivity percentage is indicated (20% PENDENZA, 18% PENDENZA) and quantities (as for example when x<sup>n</sup> is used to indicate a fairly big group of trees) are translated through the opposition of verbal expressions to create an effect of dynamism (as in the case of the onomatopoeic expression *BRUM!* to indicate the noise of cars' engines). The ultimate intention is to represent not so much one's life experience, but a general dynamism of the place.

During the conversation about this map it was possible to discuss in detail the modes and motivations that have led to the choice of the elements represented, as well as their belonging to a certain temporality. Despite minimalist graphic choices and the use of verbal expressions to provide a more personal representation, it is noteworthy that the need to represent personal practices are mainly connected to childhood games (through the representation of the football field, the hobbyhorse and the swing). In particular, it is the central area of the drawing that makes explicit the ludic character of this map. As E. explains, this deals with two important moments in his childhood: the breaking of the church window while playing football (indicated by the onomatopoeic word *CRASH*) and when the ball fell in the

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<sup>14</sup>For our methodology we have taken inspiration from Jacques Fontanille (2008)'s model.

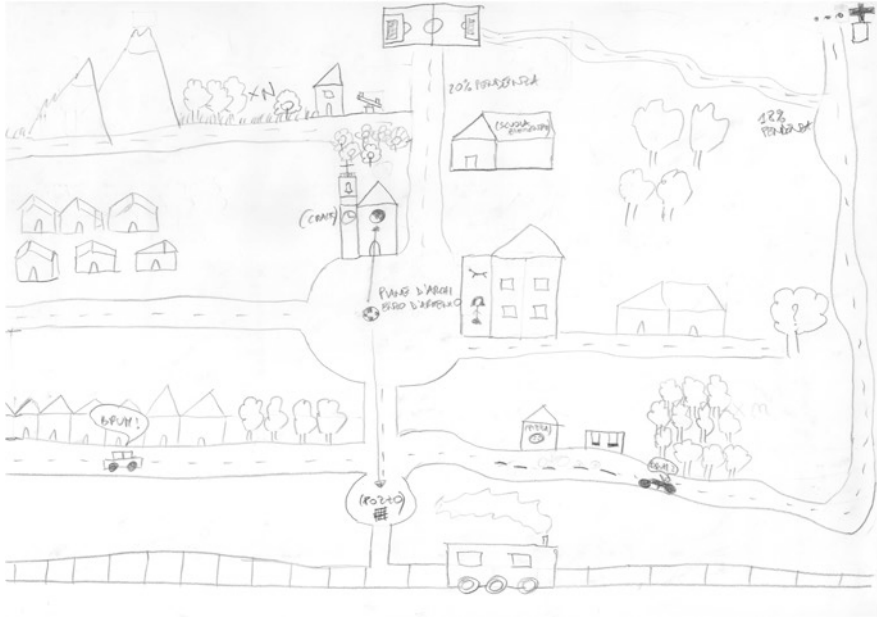


Fig. 1 E.'s map – Piane d'Archi (Chieti)

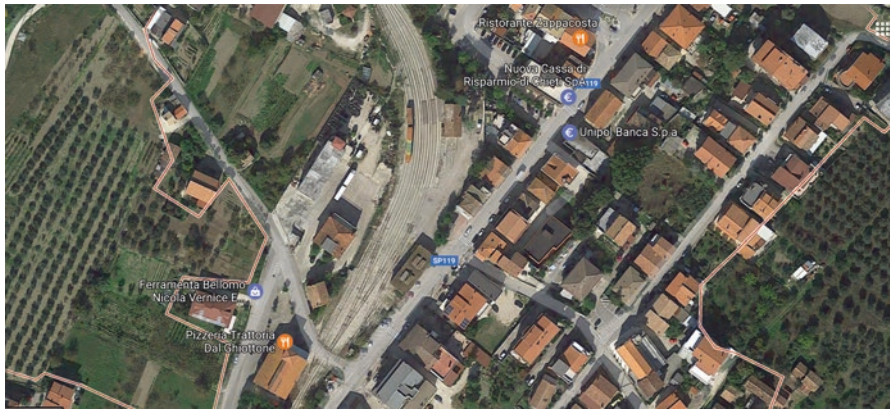


Fig. 2 Google maps of Piane d'Archi – orientation indicated by E

well (indicated with POZZO). The importance of these events seems to be rendered through the central position of these elements along with the inclusion of arrows to indicate the directionality of the ball.

As can be noted in the photograph of the map of the village (Fig. 2), the dimension of the church is absolutely relative to a possible segmentation of the different areas of the village. However, when the satellite and the Google street images were compared (Fig. 3), E.'s motives for his choices became clearer.



**Fig. 3** Street view of Pianese d'Archi, details of the Church square

The dimension of the square – not measurable in Fig. 2 – in the frontal picture in Fig. 3 shows that the image is filtered through the gaze of a child for whom distances appear larger than they really are. The representation of the square on the map is clearly inspired by a child's perception of spaces that are associated with events and experiences that date back to childhood years.

This tendency has also been noted in other drawings. As in E.'s case, these are maps drawn by young people who, during their adolescence, moved from their place of origin to go and study elsewhere none of whom returned to their original home. All of them still have an occasional, but continuous, relationship with their place of origin. The first case is that of M. who has represented Valfabbrica, in the province of Perugia (Fig. 4).

The map represents areas that are characterized by different density; almost all the elements are placed on an axis that from the lower left corner extends to the opposite side. Besides M.'s home, all these elements represent key places in the village, and in particular places and activities connected with childhood and adolescence (the central square, the church, some shops, schools). These elements are represented in a detached way as coordinates and places where events took place. During the conversation it transpired that M. regards his place of origin with a certain anxiety and indifference, M. feels detached from it and he only returns there to visit his family. This emotional distance is registered in the map's general objectifying tendency, and emphasised by some of its elements, for example the word STOP – one of the features mentioned in M.'s interview, and, later on, in the comparative analysis with Google Maps (Fig. 5) – that is repeated three times in the drawing.

The streets of the village represent a central element of the map because they provide continuity with the representation and are endowed with perceptual salience – as one can see from a comparison with the satellite view, where the village appears criss-crossed by a thick network of streets. During the interview a





**Fig. 6** F.'s map – Camporosso (Imperia)

personal element associated with M.'s life has emerged; this clarifies that the meanings of the word “stop” in the village – that refers to signs, size and the dynamics of driveability – are associated in M.'s memory with a very specific action that is not connected with childhood: that is to say learning to drive a car. For this reason, M.'s representation specifically centers around the experience of learning to drive, which implies the discovery of a new mode to movement around that place. The dimension of streets and the signal “stop” are taken from a praxeological universe connected with a very specific moment in the life of the authors of the maps. The representation of streets that are made to appear bigger than in reality and the temporal rhythms of movement are connected to a precise action (learning to drive) that leads to the discovery of a new and different way of experiencing one's place of origin. This new modality provides new regimes of visualization and movement, opening up new possibilities for understanding boundaries: the village is not a closed entity to walk around at a slow pace, but it is a place to speed through and one that can be left behind very quickly.

A similar instance is showed in F.'s map of Camporosso (Imperia) (Fig. 6), the place where F. lived in two different houses during his/her childhood and adolescence. F.'s choice was to take as a reference point the place where he/she lived until 7 years of age and which in the drawing is positioned below the first street that is left blank, in the upper part of the right section.

This choice is of fundamental importance in understanding the graphic organization of the map: unlike other elements such as the sea and the hills, the two homes,

as M. has explained, are not very far away from each other. F.'s choice and operation of de-densification uses parameters that have influenced the orientation of the whole map. According to M.'s guidelines, the map was supposed to be read through a 90° rotation on the right of the image taken from Google Maps that represents the area drawn (Fig. 7), where elements and main vectors can be easily identified.

This map, even more clearly than the previous ones, presents a temporally organized route, which can be re-traced by following F.'s reading instructions: starting from the upper left and following the represented route, it is possible to encounter various elements on the map that are shown in a precise way (street crossings, the succession of house, parking lot, school and playgrounds, the torrent Nervia and, in the lower part, a small stream); all this suggests that the highlighted situation has been elaborated accordingly with a situated process. F.'s description has been organized on the basis of explanations that have helped him understand and allowed others to make sense of the reasons of his/her representational choices. What is revealed is that the represented space has been articulated in relation to the author's use of a bicycle to move around. Hence the importance of the bicycle track that is represented on the upper left part. F.'s map is an attempt to represent an habitual route followed during his childhood years, with all those deformations of space that come from the experience of movement in and across that space. The temporal experience of bicycling and continuity that characterizes movement on a bicycle contribute to a linearization of the route represented. The landscape is characterized by the limits and the physical effort connected with the use of the bicycle. This point of view explains the inclusion of the only element that does not feature in Google Maps and that is actually beyond the torrent represented in the lower part: the cross track, that, as F. explains, was one of his favourite places during childhood precisely because of his/her interest in cycling. This choice has also led to the omission of all those details that are not connected with the spatial representation of movement – as testified by large areas left blank and the houses barely sketched. In short, F.'s map has been largely inspired by the memory of routes, by childhood motor habits that have emerged during the interview and of which the subject was only vaguely aware of while drawing the map.

In all the three cases that have been mentioned here, we have noted the attempt to integrate aspects that were possible only through an immersion in the environment. In particular, the lived experience of the place has inspired the drawing through motor and visual regimes that impose themselves on the drawing activity and act at different levels. This primarily influences the framing of the general structure of the representation (its limits, focalization and choice of elements), as in the case of F.'s map. Moreover, as in M.'s case, this is of fundamental importance for the creation of a *pattern* that “keeps together” the whole composition, making it easier to put together each single element. In both cases we are confronted with experiences of movement mediated by the specific means of transport that has conditioned the habitual patterns of behaviour connected with those places and, above all, the perception of the space.





**Fig. 7** Google maps image of the Camporosso area the orientation of the map was suggested by the author of the map

The activities that inspire particular representational choices are peculiar in their embodied nature; to bike or to drive are interiorized habits,<sup>15</sup> integrated in the totality of the gaze, where perceptive and praxeological forms are constructed as simultaneous forces. In all three cases, an *ex novo* commensurability<sup>16</sup> between shareable representation and first person experience is probed. In particular, this is noticeable due to a “migration of features” from a field effect to the object; hence characteristics of subjective integration in the context of situation are condensed in the object represented, becoming its properties. In this way the perceived hugeness of the street – a result of field dynamics – is figuratively transferred in the width of the street represented. In attempting to find a new translating rule, the author of the drawing resort to a sort of *molar labour*<sup>17</sup>: that is to say he/she draws from perceptual memory including only the relevant aspects in relation to a certain situated practice.

### 3.2 *Saving the Appearances of Appearances*

In the cases we have discussed, movement:

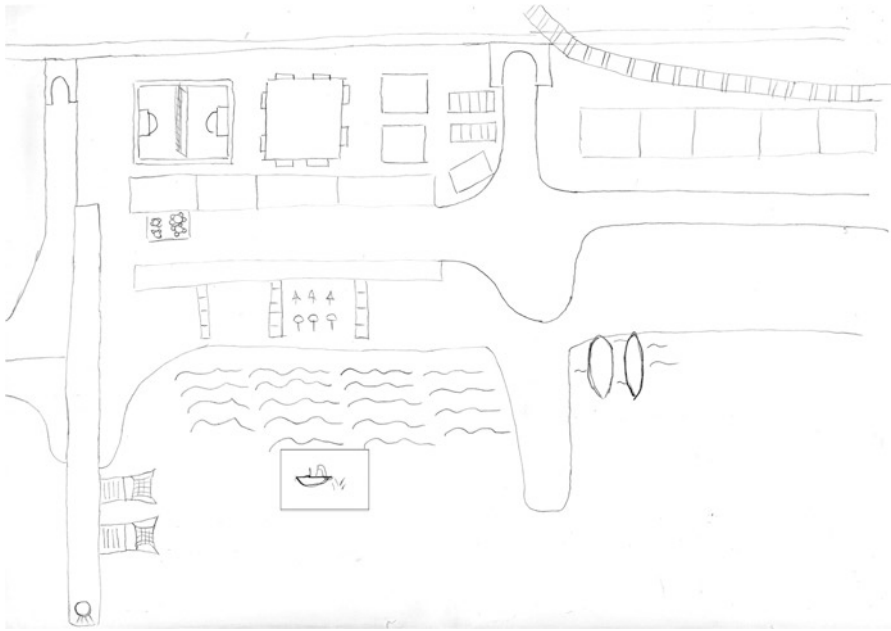
1. forms a special relationship with memories of childhood habits, adolescence, or associated with important life events;

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<sup>15</sup>The role of means of transport on perception in the Twentieth Century has been studied in Marc Desportes *Paysages en mouvement* (2005). The author argues that these techniques force on the traveller new ways of doing and perceiving things through a new way of managing movement.

<sup>16</sup>In this case, we talk about *ratio difficilis* (Eco 1976), because the ‘expression-type’ directly matches its ‘content-type’. Eco has defined this as a particular type of “motivation” of the expression by the nature of content.

<sup>17</sup>We evoke and gather together the ideas of *labour* and of *molar pertinentization*, both introduced by Eco. The first one has been elaborated in 1975 in the framework of the theory of signs production proposed in the second part of *A Theory of semiotics*. The *labour* is a particular parameter in the whole theory, introduced to account for the physical work of sign’s production, that is to explain the way in which material continuum is physically shaped and cut. The latter comes from some considerations on the consequences of the idea of *primary iconism* – introduced in *Kant and the Platypus* (1997) – to explain perceptual processes from a phenomenological point of view (Eco 2007/2014). In 1997, with the concept of *primary iconism* Eco posited “a started point or a *primum*, which was at the origin of all subsequent inferential processes” (ivi: 508). This formulation received some criticism: as the idea of *icon* has to be intended in the framework of anti-intuitionism and of a theory of continuity, it is impossible to detect a similar conception in Peirce’s philosophy and semiotics – which inspired Eco (on this point, see Fabbrichesi 2017). In reply, he returns on this issue in 2007 defending primary iconism as a personal re-elaboration of some peircean passages. More precisely, Eco motivates his inquiry moving from a *phenomenological* point of view. It is in this wake, the author distinguishes the ideas of *molecular* from that of *molar pertinentization*. If the first one concerns the possible limitless negotiation of inferential processes, the second one accounts for the operation of a selection of relevant features by a perceiving subject due to the limits accorded to his possibilities. It follows that these limits are always chosen *in* and imposed *by* a certain practice – namely, by the context and the habits that it implies –. Therefore, with *molar labour* we refer to a kind of production that has its own local construction rules and set a pertinent limit according to the relevances imposed by a specific situated practice. This is clearly related to the concept of *ratio difficilis* – see footnote 16 above.



**Fig. 8** E.'s map, case illustrated in Mazzeo

2. attempts to include in cartographical representations elements connected with motor experiences.

The narrative frames within which these practices took place (to drive for the first time, to cycle through a bicycle track etc.) are of central importance. The internal tension between *transitivity* (cartographical correctness) and *figuration* (endowing place with a recognizable physiognomy) typical of all cartographical representations (Beyaert-Geslin 2013) can also be found in these representations. The need to visually represent lived movements has been expressed through different modalities that also depend on the graphic ability of the authors of the maps. With *naïve* draughtsmen this representational effort can be traced during the conversations on the maps. A case similar to those that we have discussed here is that illustrated by Mazzeo, chapter “[Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis](#)”, in this volume (see Fig. 8).

The author while explaining her map, explained that “the small marks sketched under the slide represent E. and her cousin diving. In particular, their favourite game was to see who managed stay under the water longer”. During the conversation with E. important readings have emerged that clarify otherwise obscure aspects of the representation of movement. The cases we will take into consideration now concern representations that use more recognizable assessed techniques – such as, for example, perspective – as well as fairly sophisticated forms of representation (pictorial

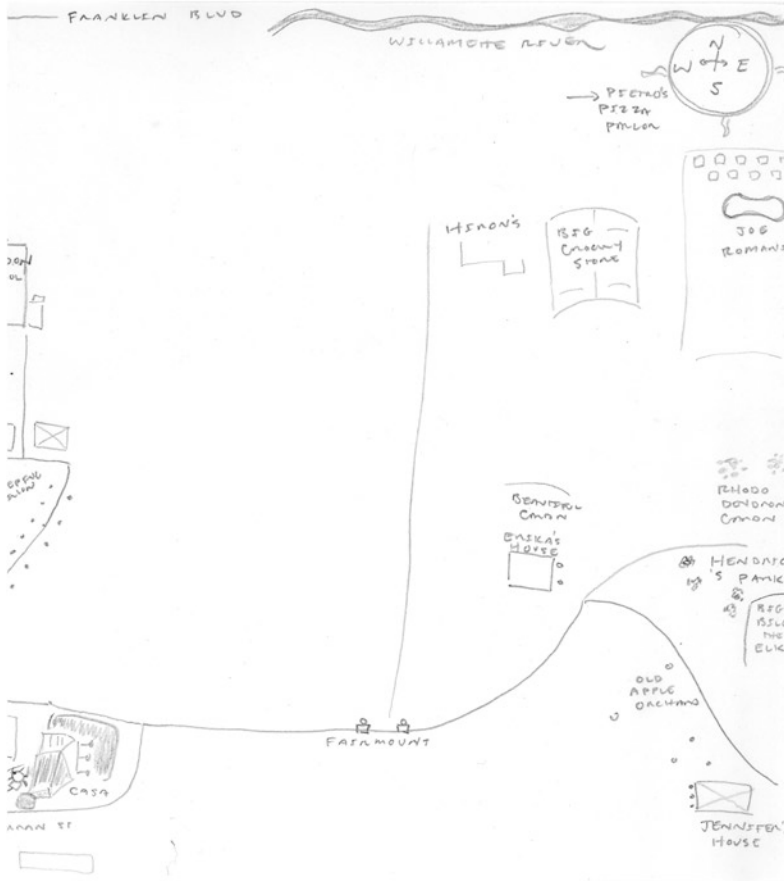


Fig. 9 Graphic minimalism in vectors

typologies) to render movement effects and relations (distance, dynamics).<sup>18</sup> Often this expertise allows the realization of a more personal representation that emerges from the background of a shared visual framework. In relation to routes and the consequent organization of space, the effect of these conventions is particularly evident. In Fig. 9, for example, the representation characterized by graphic minimalism has been chosen to render the space relations of the different places of the childhood of the drawer.

The represented vectors sensibly condition the reading and the reception of the map. Because of this representational choice, the map looks like (and probably was

<sup>18</sup>This is not about the specificity of the representations drawn by an author competent in drawing – as the previously quoted case has shown. By studying drawings made by people with more advanced graphic abilities we intend to demonstrate more clearly the “reference” dynamics in relation to well-known graphic forms.





**Fig. 11** Perspective inspired to a bird's-eye-view

In the case of Fig. 11, the use of a bird's-eye-view allows a more stabilized frame to represent movement.<sup>21</sup>

This perspective does not suggest directly a route or a monolithic mode of visualization, but rather a gaze from above that imposes a precise orientation and, at the same time, multiplies routes of interpretation. This latter characteristic is reinforced

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<sup>21</sup>The *Vogelschau* has been studied by Felix Thürlemann (2009) precisely in its relation with cartographical practices. This aerial perspective offered by this kind of representation has been progressively included in a socially shared discourse thanks to the possibility of employing it for cartography – which has in turn been made possible through specific means of transport (Desportes 2005).

by the author's decision to position his/her home on the margin of the representation (that here is not clearly marked). The moving means of transportation in the lower part testifies to the traversing of place. A line closing the landscape is drawn; this has the effect of blocking the continuous oscillation of the gaze that the technique chosen for the representation would have encouraged. In this representation a clearly recognisable pictorial typology positions the reader introducing a general way to read the map. At the same time, the drawer resorts to this pictorial typology to suggest a more precise characterisation of traversing space.

It would not be completely correct to state that in these cases the lived movement in the place does not provide a consistent motivation to the drawer. Rather, we can affirm that for the drawer the way in which the place is lived natively intertwines itself with discourses on movement: the latter consist in recognisable and stabilised forms, which are able to guide perception and further visualisations as well. To render the way in which the place is lived and to obtain a specific effect, the author recurses automatically to more permanent cultural dimensions and conventions<sup>22</sup> and playfully employs historically well-established forms, but then modifies and hybridizes them. In this case, the movement in the representation is connected to the genre and the representative modalities that "reflect" and show it. Processes and techniques of reduction and stylization are required to give shape to the visualization of the place.<sup>23</sup>

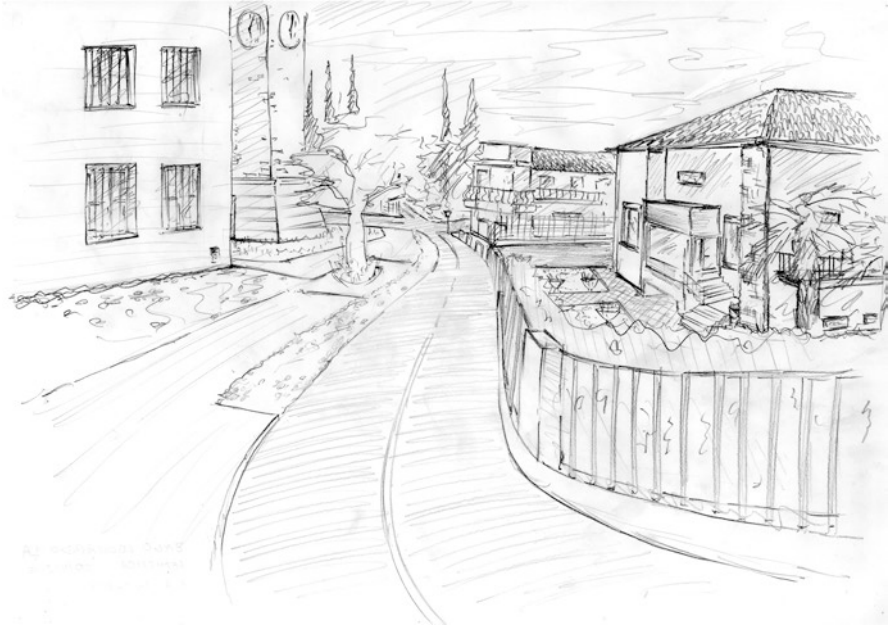
As a student of design from the University of Udine-Pordenone explained, the representation in Fig. 12 shows a foreshortening (*scorcio*, in Italian) of the village of Cimadolmo in the Treviso province.

For the representation of his place of origin, this student chose a particularly interesting solution that plays with the forms of the presence of the subject in space employing a perspective technique called *scorcio*. Here objects and bodies are

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<sup>22</sup>In these cases, we talk about *ratio facilis* (Eco 1976): the 'expression-token' matches its own 'content-type' as institutionalized by a set of conventions.

<sup>23</sup>In respect to this, we agree with Roux's reflections (1999) concerning the role of memory and knowledge in reflections on and representations of places. He proposes to abandon the idea of deformation connected to the imaginary and instead to see this as a mode of *projection*. What we have pointed out here have also several points in common with the results unregistered by some studies on translations of cognitive inputs in spontaneous speech acts. In fact, a recurrent technique used by these inquiries consists in considering verbal and drawn descriptions of apartments' lay-outs. This activity is clearly really close to the task we asked to perform: as the drawings of places of origin, "the apartments lay-outs are transformations of an input that is obviously not propositional [...] it is a state of the world which people encounter, and integrate in their cognitive structure" (Linde and Labov 1975: 935). In the wake of these surveys, it has been underlined how "the great majority of such lay-outs are imaginary tours which transform spatial lay-outs into temporally organized narratives" (ivi: 924). Even further, these narratives are often something that did not really happen but pseudo-narratives, since "no such event has actually occurred; they are hypothetical conversions of a spatial configuration" (ivi: 927). These hypothetical conversions are abstractions governed by general discourse rules depending on social conventions. This means that spatial descriptions of the apartments are not always directly dependent from the temporal organization of the *actual* experience in the place. On the contrary, they are inseparable from the temporal organization of the most *commensurable* experience in the place, accordingly to shared and stabilized discursive frames.



**Fig. 12** *Scorcio* of Cimadolmo (Treviso)

placed on an oblique plane in relation to the observer (that is not visible) obtaining in this way a distancing effect. This technique – that does not show the observing subject but only the depth of his gaze – creates the impression of being inside the representation. It finds a position and above all a perspective (in a wide sense of the word) characterized by the curved movement created by the road where the observer is positioned.

The drawings that have chosen to adopt a “first person” perspective – also called orientation – (as, for example, a *veduta*, or, as in the previous case inspired by the *vogelschau*) show an instance of commensurability of distances that is typical of landscape representations. Indeed, as Marc Desportes notes, the very idea of *landscape* should not be confused with the idea of a natural relationship to landscape. This in fact is born from the distancing of space on the part of the subject (Desportes 2005: 7, my translation); landscape represents an operative concept, a “support of proceedings, an object of transactions” (ivi: 8, my translation).

The drawing of another design student (Fig. 13) illustrates well some of the specificities of the so-called indicators of movement (that is to say the factors that produce a sensation of dynamism, mainly represented by oblique forms, and directional forces, as well as the perceptual tension that exists between these).

The representation concerns a corner of the garden of the author’s house in Vittorio Veneto in the province of Treviso. As can be seen by various elements in the landscape (the inclination of the hammock, the dispersion of graphic signs to represent a sense of vastness and endow internal distances with depth, the lightness of the





**Fig. 13** A corner of a private garden – Vittorio Veneto (Treviso)

tent exposed to the wind, the dog pictured while in motion), the drawing is a reflection on how to render movement, gesture and impressions of distance and quantity. The author of the drawing does not provide explicit visual clues as to the coordinates of his position. The scene is not static; on the contrary, we have a refined attempt to render the impression of dynamicity, exemplified by the dog moving.

The representation of movement is considered an artistic and scientific conquest as it has been elaborated since the ancient times straight to the contemporary one.<sup>24</sup> In particular, it is important to note that its evolution is characterized by the alternation and hybridization of new and old models in the attempt to find not so much a static objectivity, but a commensurability between what is perceived and what is represented. In this case, the author of the drawing has to choose or form a model of movement that suits his representation. He can either conform to standard representational conventions or highlight the results in relation to his physiognomic recognition and with the help of his graphic knowledge and competence.

This reflection takes us towards the final conclusions of our critical reflections. From this last example, (Fig. 13), we can formulate some remarks about the complex factors that allow those who draw to mark and provide a shape for their own subjectivity through their representations. The movement of animals has been the

<sup>24</sup>As illustrated well by Ruggero Pierantoni in several of his works and in particular in the one dedicated to movement published in 1986, this is the product of a plot of life practices. His analysis begins with rock paintings, goes through the knowledge on human movement during the Renaissance and considers problems of graphic design to demonstrate that the relation of techniques, practices and representations is intertwined in the models that are constructed.

object of studies that have been of central importance to the mediated nature of images. A configuration that is contiguous with the dog that is drawn in Fig. 13, based on static representation of aerial movement can be found in various visual representations. This is the case of representation of horses in the well-known painting *Horse Race* (also known as *Le Derby de 1821 à Epsom*) (1821) by Théodore Géricault, conserved at the Louvre Museum. This idea of dynamicity has been perfected throughout the centuries and revised by art movements, artefacts and new scientific techniques of representation. In particular, pioneering studies on natural movement have significantly contributed to challenge the accuracy of this kind of movement representation and to unveil its artifice.<sup>25</sup> By deconstructing movement into separate instants, these studies noted how the final result was a construction that had no direct equivalent in an “objective” movement, but was only considered “similar” once this was discursively accepted as such. These studies did not cause an immediate and total substitution of the existing models of representing movement, moreover, they were not all interpreted in the same way by different cultural domains. It was avant-garde movements, and in particular Futurism, that re-shaped their discursive understanding (from studies of movement to artistic experimentation) in modifying the idea of the representation of movement itself: what in the representation was excluded – visual crowding, continuity of figures – re-emerged and was emphasized within a complex idea of dynamism.<sup>26</sup>

Technical and artistic frames formed by a complex theory of movement are borrowed, quoted, reformulated and hybridized. The final aim is the foundation of new discourses that do not disperse their role in the process of mnemonic construction, as in the cases discussed here.

### ***3.3 Between Experience and Knowledge: Some Conclusions on Subjectivity in Representations of Places of Origin***

Treating maps of places of origin we have evoked the idea of motivation, behind which lies a complex network. The idea of motivation that has inspired our study mostly considered sensorimotor components. Here we have tried to enrich this concept giving an alternative interpretation of these factors. Indeed, sensoriality and motricity have to be considered as naturally integrated with subjects' praxeological relations and values *in* and *toward* their place of origin.

More specifically, movement in place has represented an element that has brought to our attention the complex perceptual relationship that exists among «disciplines of vision» and «eye's wandering in a daily search of various and variable clues»

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<sup>25</sup>This is the case of influential studies on human and animal movement through chronophotography.

<sup>26</sup>For an interesting comparison between the “static” model of the dog moving (Fig. 13) and a configuration which emphasizes movement continuity, see for example *Dynamism of a dog on a leash* (*Dinamismo di un cane al guinzaglio*) (1912) by Giacomo Balla.

(Desportes 2005: 343, my translation) that can be found in the internal tension of the act of representing (and self-representation). This is quite evident in the representations we analysed. These have been directly motivated by perceptual-spatial memory of the place; moreover, subjects' recollections are always rooted in habits of practical action necessarily inscribed in several socio-cultural conventions and conditions.<sup>27</sup>

Shared intertextual configurations and personal graphic solutions co-exist in graphic representations. The subject can variably appropriate the contents he/she utters (Coquet 2007) and this modulation has to be intended as a complex activity of constructing subjectivity. This is particularly evident for representations of places of origin: these are inspired by something lived in first person – that is to say the sensorimotor and perceptual experience – but they need representative and collectively stabilized forms in order to be expressed.

The maps we analysed in this study are examples of this complex mechanism; more generally, they show an essential feature of maps: «their vocation to dwell in the figural depth of discourses» (Beyart-Geslin 2013: 85, my translation).

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<sup>27</sup>The relational network we are focusing on has several common aspects with Baxandall's reflections explored at length in his famous work dedicated to Italian art in the Quattrocento (Baxandall 1972). The author's main idea was that artists' and public's "common eye" («the period eye») was modelled by the same social practices (commercial value and social dance). These guaranteed the continuity of experience and modes of representation. From this point of view, there is also a connection with what showed by Alpers (1983) in his work on Dutch painting and its relation with cartography. This relation was founded on a historical way to think and to relate with the world that can be found in the search for objectivity.

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# Genres of Maps of Places of Origin: A Semiotic Survey

Maria Pia Pozzato

**Abstract** In the first part of this essay we will explain the decisions that led to certain map classifications rather than others, which would have been suitable as well, but were judged less characteristic of the corpus as a whole (paragraph 1). In the following paragraphs, we will show, with numerous examples, the main types of maps that have been theorised (and their related comments), which are as follows: for the collective semantic area (the *epos* of the place of origin), maps that speak of a wounded land, injured, in danger (paragraph 2); or, conversely, maps that show a “monumentalised” place, through its historical, scenic, or artistic qualities (paragraph 3). For the individual semantic area (the *novel* of the place of origin), there are maps celebrating this place as an Eden, a place of the soul totally or partially lost (paragraph 4.); or, conversely, there are maps that deny the place, because it is not in tune with the real identity of the individual, or because it was considered of little value (paragraph 5). Finally, the last section will be devoted to those cases in which subjects co-belong to more than one place of origin, due to familial displacement (paragraph 6). These cases show some variety because some migrant subjects represent different places without favouring any one in particular, so making themselves promoters of a flawless intercultural “translatability”; in other cases we witness an attempt to maintain a virtual community with the places they have left, especially through social networks; and finally, in the most extreme cases, the subjects identify themselves *in toto* with transfer paths rather than with the places themselves, giving a new, more procedural and multiperspective, meaning to the term “origin”.

From a methodological point of view, this essay is inspired both by the classical tools of semiotics, in particular the visual semiotics of Louis Marin; and to parallel disciplinary approaches, like that of Gaston Bachelard and his “poetics of space”; and that of Philippe Descola and his “ontology of images”. This openness to a “weak” interdisciplinarity, between highly related disciplines, aims to integrate into the semiotic analysis some aesthetic and anthropological valences of the corpus.

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## 1 Introduction

In this section devoted to the *genres* of our maps, and then to the description of the results of a process of generalization and classification of invariants within this corpus of drawings, the first thing that needs to be underlined is that it became a very difficult job due to the complexity of the texts that we have collected. As demonstrated by the various approaches to the corpus included in this book, some of them are very different methodologically; we could have subjected the verbal-visual materials to different kind analyses, which addressed multiple levels of organisation without ever exhausting them completely, but always outlining interpretative hypotheses amenable to further investigation and verification. This phenomenon occurred *en abîme* also within my own analysis, albeit more limited compared to the research as a whole, since I realized more and more the almost infinite richness of these texts, and the impossibility to fully do justice to their potential meaning.

Semiotics is by tradition the enemy of the ineffable, and believes that not saying much is better than saying nothing, though sometimes the most appropriate attitude is that of a certain humility in the face of the descriptive task. And it is with this attitude that I gradually recorded, as the close observation of the maps progressed, some significant recurring traits and then organized them in (hypothetical) constants. The resulting final system can give the impression of excessive reductionism: most likely the reader, while looking at the examples, will think of alternative hypotheses of map classification, because, in the analysis of texts, of any text, the reader-descriptor proceeds in a quasi-gestaltic way based on the variable pertinentiations of traits.<sup>1</sup> As now widely accepted from contemporary epistemology, the type of viewpoint chosen changes the object of the analysis from the start. In semiotics you never think of the corpus as mere actuality, based on a positivistic or referentialistic assumption. The corpus is always *built* by the analysis, whether it is an apparently objective text because it is formerly completed (such as a novel for example), or whether we are studying texts produced *ad hoc*, according to an established protocol, as in the case of our maps.<sup>2</sup> The classification proposed here does not claim to be either exhaustive nor the only possible one, but rather to be one of the possible keys to reading the corpus according to a structuralist aspiration to restore, in the form of articulated content, what was previously interpreted in a nebulous form.

It is my personal belief, after years of work on various types of texts, that we should not only use semantic categories which are pre-established<sup>3</sup> but try to choose

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<sup>1</sup>According to Thomas Kuhn, the ability to see varied situations as similar to one another, as applications of symbolic generalisations, can be seen in terms of a Gestalt shared within a specialised research group (Kuhn 1969).

<sup>2</sup>As defined by Rastier, a corpus is a structured grouping of complete texts, documented and collected in a theoretical-reflexive, but also practical manner, in view of an array of applications (2003).

<sup>3</sup>There are some known models that are used as heuristic keys. For example, French semiotic Jean-Marie Floch speaks in all his work about *consumer axiologies* or of a typology of values inscribed

from time to time, according to the nature of the case studies, the categories that seem most suitable for those particular cases. In other words, to calibrate the use of pre-established descriptive models (such as for example the narrative) and to identify concepts suitable for the specific textual corpus.

As we shall see in the next few paragraphs, I have tried to do just that, taking into account both the various conceptualisations borrowed from Semiotics, Anthropology and Aesthetics, but also trying to extrapolate from the texts themselves the semantic categories which are more fitting for them. The first major bifurcation that I found myself in front of was one between a classification on a purely formal basis<sup>4</sup> and a thematic classification. One could, for example, going for the first option, classify the maps on the type of perspective chosen by the subjects (drawings with an aerial perspective, with a frontal view, with a mixed perspective, etc.). I became aware very quickly that this type of classification would be not only vast, given the variety of formal traits, but also fundamentally *formalistic* and unable to describe the contents of these graphic discourses. Then Louis Marin (Marin 1994) came to my rescue when, speaking specifically about geographical maps, he emphasised that, while belonging to some great historical genres, each one of these maps should also be regarded as a unique text. When we analyse a single map, we see that each element is located in connection with all the others, forming a unique configuration in an unprecedented way. At this point I did not try any more to classify the drawings identifying only their formal traits, but to broadly understand what kind of discourse about his/her place of origin each subject was intending to convey. In other words, I would have not classified traits but rather discourses. It may seem paradoxical to start by recognising the uniqueness and originality of each case and then to move on to a generalisation and classification. But this is what all work on semiotics has been essentially trying to do over the last few decades, after the so-called *textual turn*: take the text as the basic unit, trying to discover its specific nature, and at the same time not give up on generalisation and modelisation.

For the methodological reasons set out above, I discarded classifications based on formal features, and decided to take a thematic criterion, looking for the most pervasive subjects. I am aware of the fact that limiting myself to a thematic criterion is a simplification,<sup>5</sup> but after examining several possibilities, the most convincing classification of the verbal-visual discourse produced by the nearly 200 subjects interviewed seemed to me based on three major categories<sup>6</sup>:

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in the object to be advertised: *practical-functional values* are opposed to “*existential*” values when the product is associated with a wider improvement of the buyer’s life. These broad categories are in fact used to help classify advertising texts, but, if any analysis of material is limited to the application of these categories, there is a risk that they flatten and trivialise any corpus.

<sup>4</sup>Namely classifying traits regardless of their significance in a particular context.

<sup>5</sup>In the eighth chapter of his *Arts et sciences du texte* (Rastier 2003), dedicated to the definition of “genre”, François Rastier says that the semantics of genres must take into account the interaction of four components called *thematic*, *dialectic*, *dialogic* and *tactics*. On this occasion, it would not have been possible to follow such a complex system of description.

<sup>6</sup>Please note that what structural semiotics means by “category” is the semantic opposition of two terms in a relation of contrariety. The way to label lexical categories and terms is always partly



<i>Axis of belonging</i>	belonging to a single place of origin	vs	belonging to two or more places of origin
<i>Axis of social space</i>	damaged place of origin	vs	monumentalisation of the place of origin
<i>Axis of individual space</i>	utopia of place of origin	vs	dystopia of place of origin

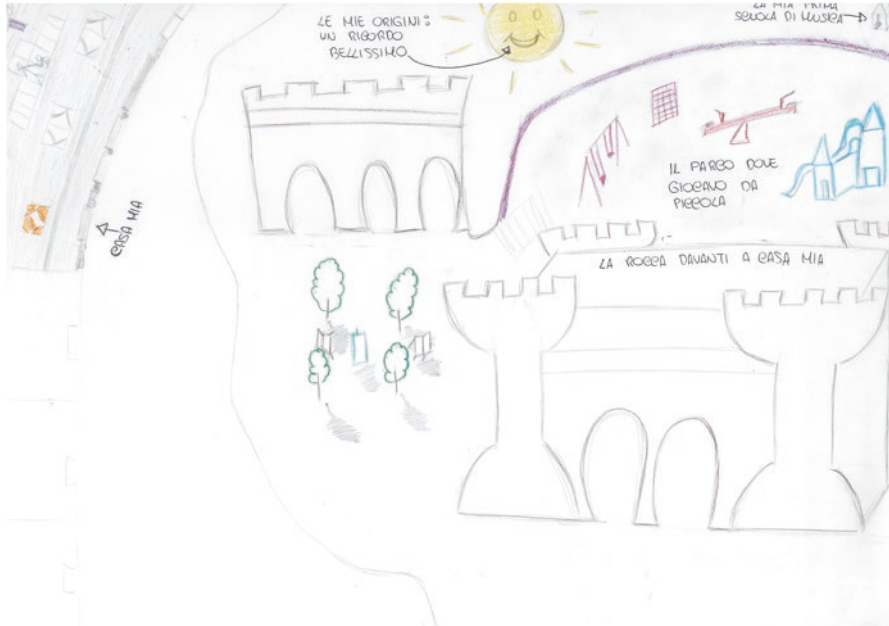
In very simple terms, just to give some idea of the material that will be shown, what emerged was a preponderance of *tensions* within the semantic space, that is opposing trends between those: (1) expressing their deep roots in one place, on the one hand, or a largely uneasy co-belonging, to more than one place (*axis of belonging*); (2) a focus on the discussion of the place of origin as a place for community, sometimes in decline and damaged by social or natural causes (excessive urbanisation, earthquakes, etc.), or on the contrary exalted in several ways that made it famous, such as monuments, historic events, tourist “marketability”, etc. (*axis of social space*); (3) a construction, through their words, of the place of origin as a personal utopia, almost a lost paradise, or, conversely, as a place of suffering, of the past to be forgotten or disowned through elisions, displacements, discursive effacements (*axis of individual space*).

Notice how the opposition between social space and individual space recalls one of the possible classifications of narrative genres that distinguishes the *epic*, focusing on the collective ego, from the *novel*, focused on the individual ego.<sup>7</sup> This distinction relates to the subject matter under discussion: one is a story that involves a community, the other a story about a particular individual, or at least their inner circle. In my opinion therefore, this opposition is only apparently similar to the opposition between *histoire* (history) and *discours* (discourse) of Émile Benveniste (1966), that relates not to the type of subject matter, but to the position of the enunciating subject: more subjective in relation to personal experience in the case of the *discours*, more objective in the case of the *histoire*. In our drawings and in their verbal commentaries, we will see that the distinction between epic and novel, to go back to the theory of literary genres mentioned above, is more useful for classifying them because the distinction between *histoire* and *discours* (à la Benveniste) seems to vary across different cases: sometimes the style in our texts is more objectifying or more subjectivising, it varies a lot depending on the individual, whatever the story actually tells us. So some maps can give the greatest importance to monumental elements yet putting them in a close relationship with the personal story, such as in Fig. 1, where the Fortress of Senigallia is put in the foreground, yet specifying “la

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arbitrary: for example, you could replace “monumental” with other words capable of expressing the evaluation of a place on the basis of super-subjective criteria: terms such as “museification”, “heroic myth”, “commercialisation” nevertheless seemed to me less broad than “monumentality” which, precisely because of its metaphorical character, manages to subsume different phenomena.

<sup>7</sup>Todorov (1978). References to traditional classifications of literary genres necessarily stop here, what I mentioned is simply indicative, given the enormous complexity of the subject and the number of authors who have dealt with it, from antiquity to the present day.



**Fig. 1** The Fortress of Senigallia

rocca davanti a casa mia” (“the fortress in front of my house”); on the other hand, the drawing can focus on a very specific area such as the entrance to their home, but in a completely impersonal, objective, style, as in Fig. 2 where the image appears to be taken from a surveillance camera:

We can find in Jurij Lotman an opposition between *texts oriented to the listener* and *texts oriented to the speaker* (Lotman et al. 1973) which is equally too general to help classify our maps. The former are designed to be “friendly” to their addressee, to make their own content clear for him/her; the latter are more hermetic, intended for a small group or for only self-communication to the person who enunciates it.<sup>8</sup> The subjects studied by us have shown both these positions: some are willing to talk, they apply markings or legends, draw many details, want to explain everything; others keep their own privacy, sometimes risking a total incomprehensibility with their drawings and discourses. In Fig. 3 we see an example of a very co-operative speaker, while in Fig. 4, the drawing of a female student from the University of Rome, we see a very minimal image which is, moreover, oddly accompanied by writing in English:

A transversal parameter that could constitute a criterion for classification on a formal basis is the calibration of visual and verbal language: a problem which, as you can guess, is of enormous theoretical and methodological importance. Given that we have chosen a thematic classification criterion instead, we will discuss the

<sup>8</sup>A similar distinction can be found with the deaf subjects studied by Murgiano, *infra*.

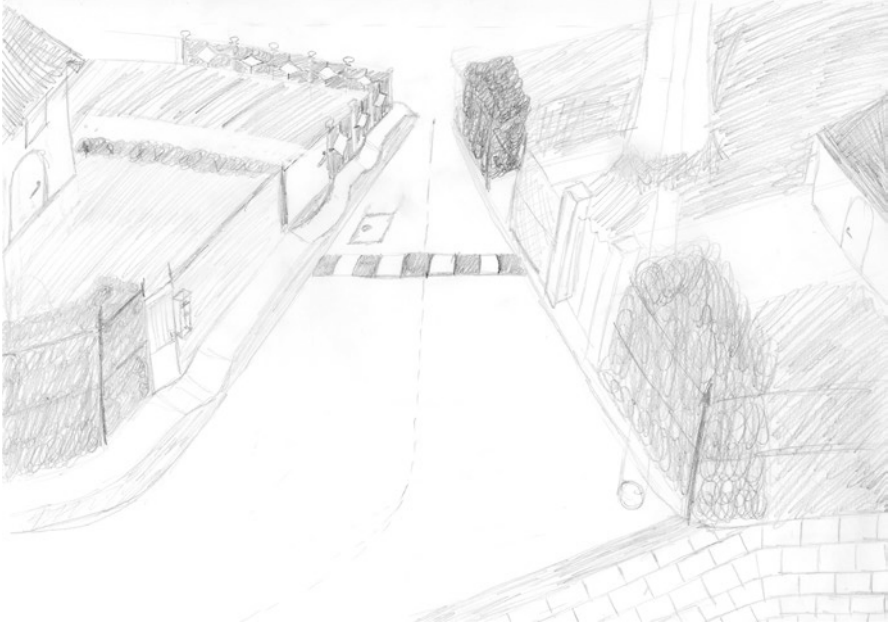


Fig. 2 Impersonal, objective, style

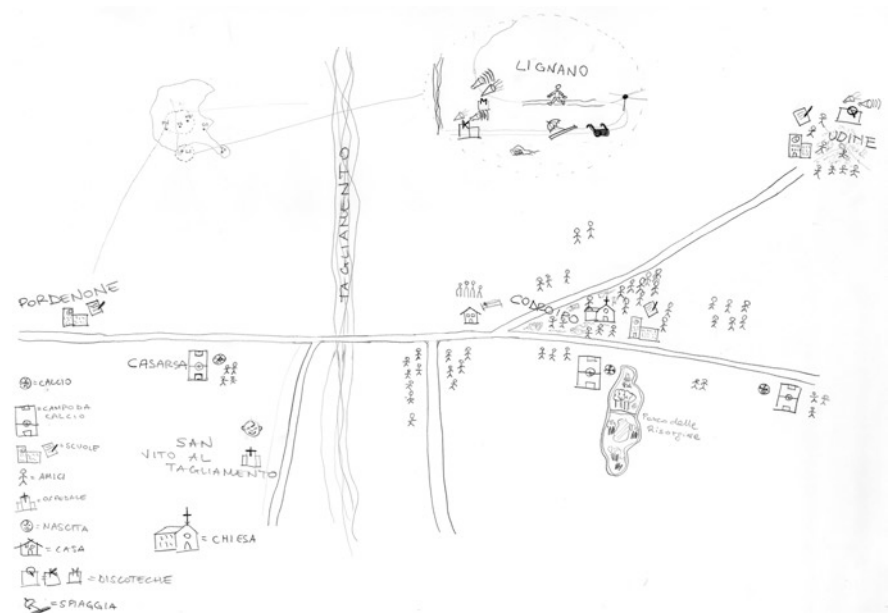


Fig. 3 Co-operative speaker



Fig. 4 Minimal image, writing in English

problem of syncretism<sup>9</sup> not overall, but when the question arises as a relevant one in some maps. We shall see, not only in this essay but elsewhere in the book, that the people chose, in a very personal and variable way, what and how much they expressed themselves graphically or verbally. A psychological approach identifies different ways of storing memories in the visual and in the verbal field (see Mazzeo's essay). Semiotics, first considers all the different levels of the conventionality of the two languages: in the analysis of these maps the distinction by Umberto Eco between *ratio facilis* and *ratio difficilis* is all the more useful (Eco 1975): the wind rose, even with the winds that blow, is produced through *ratio-facilis* because its main features are highly coded; while those who must render a place graphically, with its emotional colouring as well, must create a new and original expressive model, by *ratio-difficilis*. In other words, how much has each person worked in search of an expressive model, and how much relied on conventional words and imagery? For example, if instead of drawing my grandma's house I outline its plan, the expressive effort is minimal, despite the high degree of detail. Also replacing the images with words indicates a retreat to the *ratio facilis*: it is too difficult to find a new visual expressive solution, so I resort to a linguistic code based on the *ratio-facilis*. In other words, it is easier to write "my dog" than to draw a dog actually

<sup>9</sup>Semiotics defines *syncretism* as the intertwining of different languages, within a text. In our texts, considering the verbal comments as well, there is a syncretism between visual and verbal language (this last, oral and written). What is particularly emphasised in the field of Semiotics is that one must consider how unified the syncretic enunciation strategy is, in other words, that the meaning of the syncretic text is not a sum of the meanings conveyed separately by the various languages but something inextricably unified.



Fig. 5 Ratio facilis, ratio difficilis

similar to a specific dog. Sometimes it is difficult to understand why a person slips from one model to another: an adult woman, who had drawn with skill and great detail her place of origin, in the lower left of the sheet instead of drawing a swing has put the words “the almond tree where I had my swing...” (“mandorlo dove facevo l’altalena...”). In this drawing it is clear that the subject has made extensive use of both visual and verbal languages, and the verbal parts are used partly to make sense of images and partly to replace them.<sup>10</sup>

The degree of codification does not seem to depend on the degree of skill in the drawing: sometimes people with good drawing skills, as with the author of the drawing shown in Fig. 5, could be resorting to very conventional graphic solutions; on the contrary, people who have no drawing skills, endeavour to render their mnemonic experience creatively, albeit in a rather naïve way. Another problem we encountered in the relationship between the visual and verbal can at times be linked to what the Swiss semiotician Jacques Geninasca calls the “true detail”,<sup>11</sup> that is an extremely vivid detail which stands out even though it is difficult to understand how important it could be in its narrative context. Only through a verbal commentary can

<sup>10</sup>The largest words say: “Farmyard hens and rabbits... Bunnies had a special fascination for me. My mother let me handle them gently. I was looking at them for hours.” (“Aia galline e conigli... I coniglietti avevano un fascino particolare per me. Mia madre me li faceva prendere con delicatezza. Stavo per ore a guardarli”). The bunnies are not represented visually.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. the article “L’invention du détail vrai. *Le Rouge et le Noir* de Stendhal, Livre second, cap. XXXVI” (Geninasca 1982), in Geninasca 1997, pp. 147–162.



**Fig. 6** The “true detail”

this detail become coherent. For example, a female student from the University of Oregon gave great importance to a tree, represented in a colourful and lively way. When asked to explain why, she simply said that the tree had always been of great importance for her (Fig. 6).

A deepened psychoanalytic analysis would perhaps be able to advance some hypotheses about displacement, condensation and denial phenomena. We will see later, in Sect. 4, the case of a student from the University of Bologna who omits a window from the drawing of his house because he had been unhappy in that room. In this case it was the student himself, commenting on his drawing, that made us aware of the omission. Without this it would not have been possible to detect it. We must ultimately accept that our understanding of these images will never be complete, because, as with dreams, we can only get a better meaning by obtaining from the interviewed subjects a collection of comments and mental associations. What we, as semioticians, can do is to study the forms of insertion of the verbal elements in the visual text, following the example of the exceptional analysis of Meyer Shapiro in the area of the semiotics of art (Shapiro 1996), and come to a final interpretation to the extent allowed by the textual elements that we have.

This concludes the overview of the possible categories which, while important, were discarded as key-concepts in our classification work. At least as regards the whole group of texts collected by us, the three categories mentioned above

(damaged land/monumentalisation of the territory of origin; utopia of place/dystopia of the place of origin; belonging to a single/belonging to two or more places of origin) are clearer and powerful in structuring the materials. We have to think of these categories in terms of a dialectic tension among them, rather than in clear opposition to each other. For example, there are several ways to build a discourse about a damaged land or a utopian origin. Moreover, the three categories could be woven between them: for example, among the migrants who feel they belong to multiple places, some describe these places as Edenic and others do so in a negative way; in other cases the collective traits (damaged or historico-monumental) of the represented territories can tally with a more personal experience when the subject feels it closely mirrors his/her social context. But all this will become clear in the course of the following paragraphs.

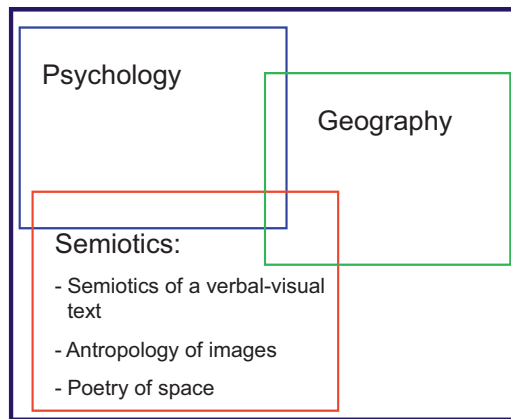
One final methodological option we should mention here however, before getting the analysis itself, refers to a kind of “weak” interdisciplinarity within this contribution, as part of a stronger one that characterises the research as a whole. By analysing the texts, then “listening” to them before constructing our generalisations, I realised that for a semiotician some traits were easily recognizable (such as the different strategies of enunciation, the figurative density,<sup>12</sup> the narrative structures etc.), and that I could have limited myself to a classical analysis of this type. Because of the epistemological limits of my discipline, I did not use any psychological tool<sup>13</sup> while I could have skipped the fact that these drawings were at times, and in many ways, the result of an aesthetic treatment of the subject’s place of origin: some interviewees designed their drawings in a typically artistic manner, they chose to show their place of origin in a non-objective but aesthetic way, trying to express the rhythms of those places and the feelings they inspired more than their realistic aspects. To lose this level of meaning would be a mistake and I defend the idea that a part at least of this corpus has an aesthetic value, not so much in the sense of high artistic quality, but in the sense of an aesthetic construction, by virtue of metaphors, creation of parallelisms and other specific formal arrangements capable of affecting the interpreter at a sensitive level. To assess these elements Gaston Bachelard, Algirdas Greimas, and Jacques Geninasca will be briefly cited, since they have all tried to study, in texts, some structural features that can be looked at in this way. Finally, I found it interesting to note that in some of our maps the anthropological categories theorised by Philippe Descola, about the production of images, could be recognised. According to his theory, there are four great “ontologies”: *animism* according to which, animals, plants, spirits and even certain objects are seen and treated as people, intentional agents with a soul; *naturalism*, chosen by people of the Modern age, according to which only humans have a soul, a mind, an intentionality, and nature is instead where there is a physical predictable regularity; *totemism*, which ignores the difference between human and non-human, and brings together within a type, an ancestral prototype, qualities that belong to both human and non-

<sup>12</sup>That is, how much the elements were represented as abstract or concrete, detailed or generic.

<sup>13</sup>Others developed this aspect. See, in this volume, the contribution of Giulia Mazzeo (chapter “Maps of Places of Origin or Maps of Self: A Graphic and Conversational Analysis”).

human; and the *analogicism* which is based on a fragmentation into a myriad of properties of beings and things, and the consequent need to find conformities that restore order and a sense of things. We will see that in some cases our map drawings seem to be inspired by one or other of these ways of conceiving the world that are all still alive in the varied cultures of the planet.<sup>14</sup>

I have spoken about a “weak” interdisciplinarity as semiotics, aesthetics and anthropology, especially in their structuralist declensions, are sister-disciplines, and thus there is no strong discontinuity between their points of view, yet they can, in my opinion, quite easily complement each other. We can see in this diagram the various disciplinary areas of this research and, within the semiotic one, the disciplines with which we have chosen to have a dialogue in this contribution:



The overlapping areas in the diagram express the belief that within these various disciplines, including those most apparently dissimilar, there remains a possibility for dialogue and cooperation, despite the undeniable problems of *incommensurability*, as theorised by Thomas Kuhn; or *untranslatability*, as discussed by Jurij Lotman referring to the structural characteristics of the various cultural spheres. Between groups belonging to different paradigms there may be some difficulties with comparisons, and if we want to collaborate we have to play the role of translator. So for us, in this research, there were translatable and untranslatable areas, to use the terms dear to Kuhn, and no one among us has been compelled to *convert* him/herself to the other’s discipline with a sort of Gestaltic transformation. Also, in the other essays, inspired by the three core disciplines of the research (Semiotics, Psychology and Geography), we can regularly find instances of “weak” interdisciplinarity as each author set up a dialogue with different neighbouring disciplines.<sup>15</sup> This is a benefit

<sup>14</sup>We refer in particular to the article “Manières de voir, manière de figurer” (Descola 2010). Some examples and explanations that we will use also stem from the seminar that Descola held at the Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici of the University of Bologna on 26–28 May 2016, and which will be part of a book in preparation, on the anthropology of images.

<sup>15</sup>For example Margherita Murgiano takes into account Semiotics and the linguistic of Sign



because by so doing they have multiplied the viewpoints available on the object of analysis. The goal rather than a theoretical and methodological unity should be to foster awareness of the different frameworks to which we are referring, where they intersect and what each can claim, within the limits of their underlying assumptions.

## 2 The Damaged Region

One of the isotopies<sup>16</sup> present in our research corpus refers to “damage” of various kinds that the places have suffered, and which inspired their graphic representation. The subjects often consider their places of origin as something very personal, private, but sometimes they can also consider them as collective entities that may be affected by the trauma of history and nature. These traumas can be of various types: natural, such as earthquakes, landslides, floods, volcanic eruptions; or historical, linked in particular to recent wars. We know how Italian territory is not infrequently exposed to seismic and hydrogeological risk, and in every part of the country there have been serious events that have left their mark for decades if not centuries.

The first example we will look at is Sermide, a small town in the province of Mantua. This case study, that a female student examined in depth for her final exam with me after having drawn the map in the classroom along with all the others (Fig. 7), has had both historical and natural disasters: the village, during the first war of independence, was the subject of a repressive massacre that gave it a lot of notoriety, and is therefore still remembered today as a significant event for the collective identity of the town.<sup>17</sup> But the more persistent threat is from the river Po that borders the town to the north, and that over the centuries has periodically overflowed its banks, flooding the town and causing destruction and death. The river embankments are given great importance in the drawing of the student not only, as will be explained, because they defend the town from periodic flooding, but also because the via Regia, which for centuries has connected Sermide to Ferrara and to Venice, runs over them.

This area is represented as damaged in the past, and with the potential to be damaged in the future. The gradual raising of the embankment occurred following repeated flooding and the situation now seems under control. The community that

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Language; Enzo D’Armenio relates aesthetic theories and media theories; and Giulia Mazzeo’s contribution connects the different fields of cognitive, environmental and clinical Psychology.

<sup>16</sup>*Isotopy* in Semiotics means a repetition of *semes* (semantic traits) in the text. The *isotopies* may be *figurative*, when the recurring traits are concrete, or *thematic* when the recurrence relates to abstract traits, or *themes*.

<sup>17</sup>“Sermide rebelled against the Austrian occupiers (as did the cities of Milan, Brescia, Venice and many others). The reaction to the resistance was merciless: July 29, 1848 the Austrian troops crushed the resistance of the Sermidese, sacked the old town and burned many houses. On 10 September 1899, King Umberto I decorated Sermide with a gold medal and awarded her the title of city.” (Our translation from the girl’s paper).





**Fig. 8** Sermide on Google map

The destructive events in a place, in a case like this, become controllable incidents and are overcome within a collective epos that is able to reconstruct the territorial fabric narratively and materially after every incident, whether it derives from a real river or from the metaphorical flood from history. From the perspective of an ecological anthropologist such as Philippe Descola,<sup>19</sup> the approach of this girl seems predominantly *naturalist*: human beings are human beings and nature is nature, the two spheres are distinct and the human component can actively control and objectively describe the natural.

Curiously, I also had a map of Moglia di Sermide, a village in the same area, made by another student but with totally different characteristics (Fig. 12). Again the river and the embankment are of great importance but the perspective is different: while the former was a bird's eye view and wanted to provide the viewer with a precise geographical framework, with the bend of the river and so on, in this case we have a frontal perspective and the focus is on the social life of the area. As it is evident from the research that the student has done later, the 'edificio della bonifica' ('building of the reclamation') is occasionally used to celebrate weddings (Fig. 13):  
She remarks:

I wanted to represent the most important places. I wanted to put the dental practice where my mum works (there is a molar tooth so you can make it out), they no longer do plays in the theatre, only bingo and parties and they also use the place for nursery school plays, also the open air stage is no longer used, now there is a cinema in Sermide and the theatre is a little run down, but all the townspeople attend the nursery school plays. Reclamation is

<sup>19</sup>We mentioned him in Sect. 1.



Fig. 9 Sermide on Facebook (aged people)

important, there are houses with machines to dredge the water and weddings are celebrated in the building you can see at the far left of the sheet. Near the bar there is a pedestrian area which in summer becomes a part of the summer bar.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>This is the original text: “Ho voluto rappresentare i luoghi più importanti. Lo studio dentistico dove lavora mia mamma ho voluto metterlo (c'è un molare per far capire), nel teatro non fanno più le commedie ma fanno la tombola e le feste anche usando il posto per i saggi dell'asilo, anche il palcoscenico all'aperto non viene più utilizzato, adesso c'è il cinema a Sermide e il teatro è un po'



Fig. 10 Sermide on Facebook (young people)

This time there is no reference to the threat from the river. On the contrary, it continually refers to water use for agriculture, perfectly set within town life. So where is the harm in this idyllic picture? It would have not emerged if the girl had not added this conclusion through her subsequent research on the area and by

decaduto, però tutto il paese è lì quando ci sono i saggi dell’asilo. È importante la bonifica, ci sono delle abitazioni con le macchine per tirare su l’acqua e in quello più a sinistra si festeggiano i matrimoni. Vicino al bar c’è un isola pedonale che d’estate diventa parte estiva del bar.”

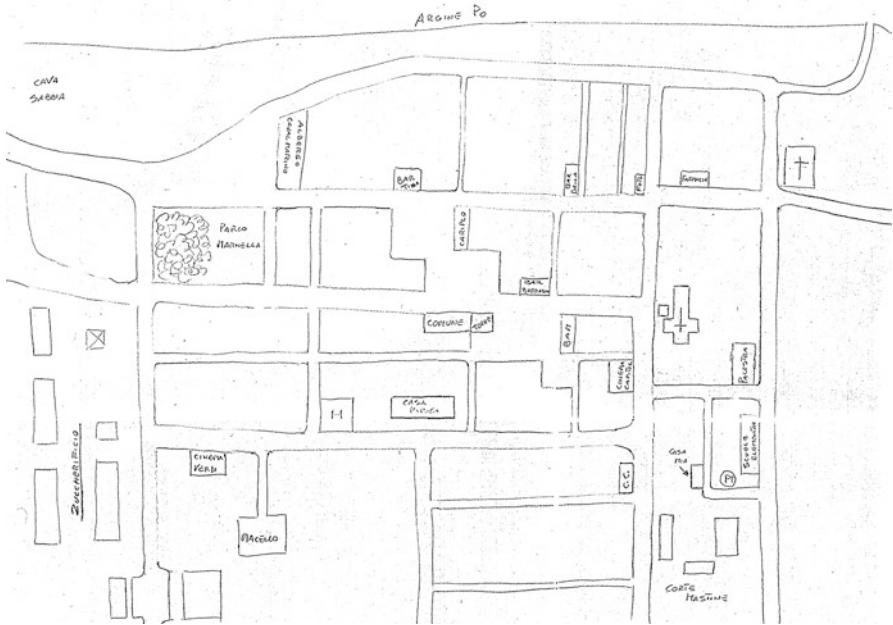


Fig. 11 The father's map

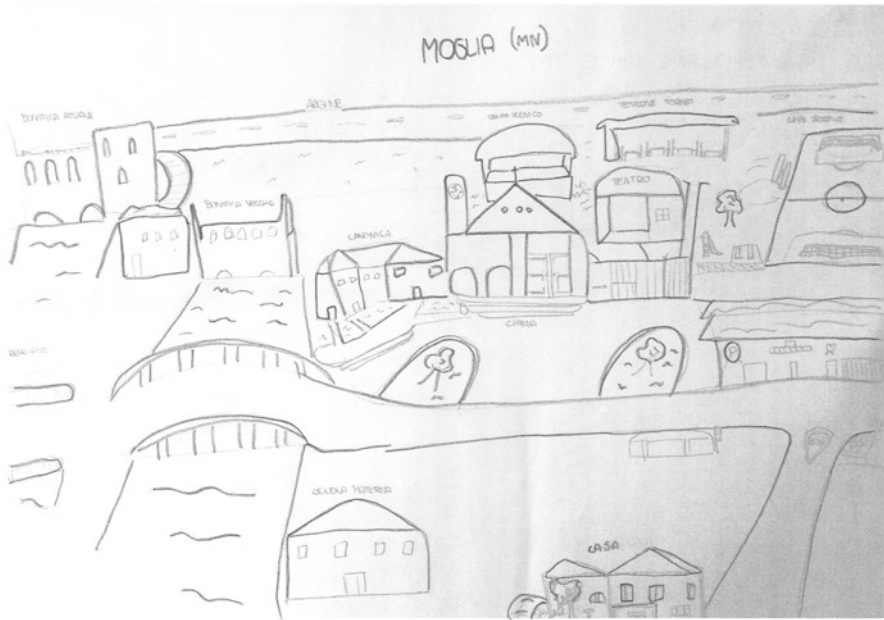


Fig. 12 Moglia di Sermide



**Fig. 13** The building of the reclamation

interviewing its inhabitants (and also through a Facebook site, created by fellow citizens: “Quei ad la Moja...”):

Most of the buildings were built between 1971 and 1980, some between 1919 and 1945 and a few others before 1919. What I wanted to emphasise with this information is that Moglia is an old area, mainly looking to the past. All the inhabitants live with a nostalgia, remembering what it was like through village events and their routes and landmarks. A witness tells me that only about 200 of the “originating” inhabitants (those who were born and raised in the village) are still there, a small portion considering the overall number of inhabitants. For this reason people say that *everything is lost*, everything in the past was different. The people, the countryside, the fauna ... nothing is as before. It remains an old-fashioned place and many traditions are still respected. And although there is the so-called “brain drain” in this village, albeit on a smaller scale, those brains cannot help but go back.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>This is the original text: “La maggior parte degli edifici è stata costruita tra il 1971 e il 1980, alcuni tra il 1919 e il 1945 e pochi altri prima del 1919. Ciò che ho voluto sottolineare con questi dati è che Moglia è un paese vecchio, principalmente rivolto al passato. Tutti gli abitanti la vivono con fare nostalgico, ricordando ciò che era attraverso le manifestazioni paesane e i loro percorsi e punti di riferimento. Una testimonianza mi avvisa che degli abitanti “originari” (coloro che vi sono nati e cresciuti) ne sono rimasti circa 200, una piccola parte considerando il numero complessivo. Per questo motivo si dice che tutto si è perso, tutto in passato era diverso. Le persone, le campagne, la fauna ... nulla è più come prima. È rimasto un paese d’altri tempi e molte sue tradizioni vengono ancora rispettate. E anche se in questo paesino si verifica la cosiddetta “fuga di cervelli”, seppur in dimensioni ridotte, quei cervelli non possono fare a meno di tornarci.”



**Fig. 14** Outskirts of Modena

Through this comment we can understand something which would not have arisen from the drawing and the purely personal representation of the place of origin: a sense of anthropological decay, an elderly place with no generational turnover, where only nostalgia maintains some traditions. This is a very important point for the research as a whole: young people, such as those usually interviewed by us, do not generally have any great awareness of this kind of social transformations, because they are still, to some extent, not far from their carefree childhood and adolescence, and somewhat centrifugally drawn toward the city where they study. It is only with later reflection, through regaining contact with the communities in their place of origin, that these young people become more aware of the problems that afflict it. This awareness seems to be notably absent in those cases where people, for various reasons, co-belong to multiple places, mainly due to emigration because of poverty or war, which we will see in Sect. 6.

In some cases, however, the interviewee, although young, is able to perceive the harm suffered by a region. We encountered, for example, cases in which the trauma stemmed from uncontrolled urbanisation. Here the survival of the community that inhabits the place is not at stake, but rather the *imageability* of that place, understood as the identifiable physiognomy of a place, according to the urban theorist Kevin Lynch (Lynch 1960). In this case, a student at the University of Bologna drew his childhood home, now abandoned, located on the outskirts of Modena. The building is shown surmounted by the ring road (Fig. 14). The boy, in addition to the map collected in class in the usual way like others, subsequently continued his search





**Fig. 15** The house now

taking a closer look at his place of origin, and so in addition to the map drawing also provided a current photo of the house, now reduced to a ruin (Fig. 15).

What emerges in this drawing is a story of urban decay in which the countryside, housing and large roads are competing for the same portions of space. The house is partially “erased”, in the drawing, by the ring road despite being large and clearly identified by the word “house of my childhood”. The site’s identity is downgraded to a *terrain vague*, or rather to a kind of space that is completely removed from any function and from any other sort of anthropic connection. From how the drawing is constructed and configured, there emerges a discourse that is both critical and poetic: the countryside, and the once rural building, are no longer *imageable*, and this lack of identity is caused by something that is sometimes called “progress”, since the construction of new roads is aimed at the fast movement of goods and

people. The words “verso Villora” (“towards Villora”) to the north and “verso Modena” (“from Modena”) to the south, emphasise this centrifugal system, an acknowledgment of the prevailing trend that reduces a formerly rural area to a hub for traffic between urban centres. Yet, the subject of the enunciation, in choosing the size of the house, its centrality in the drawing, and the unforbearing viewpoint which “submit” the house to the road, seems to condemn a tyranny. Although beyond our body of evidence, it is significant that this young man felt the desire to go and photograph his former house in its current state, in order to produce some sort of evidence of the crime. The map drawing could have represented the site in its original state, when it was inhabited, and was perhaps a happy environment for children playing. Instead a time nearer to the present was chosen, recording both the past and the present-day, or rather the relationship between the two. This tendency to create a tense relationship between past and present, rather than to opt for one of the two, is confirmed by the short text that we find on the back of the drawing which reads:

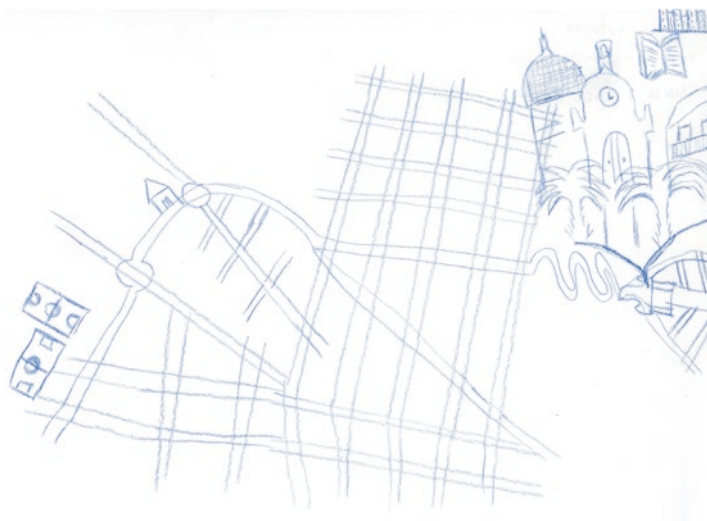
I represented as the place of origin the house where I was born, I spent my childhood, and where I lived 15 years. It is located in the countryside, now a suburb of Modena. It is very loaded with meaning for me, through the experiences and contradictions that I experienced in that house, in regards to space I am always surprised to think how that place was huge in my memory, and yet now I perceive it as very small.<sup>22</sup>

The subject who lived there as a child but also as a teenager, recognizes inside himself the same *contradictions* that define the current state of the place: these contradictions are perceptual, because the young man remembers how he perceived the world as a child, which magnifies sizes, and he makes a comparison with his current perception, of an adult, that lessens them; but qualitative contradictions are mentioned as well, since the area is found to be both “countryside” and the “suburbs of Modena”. One of the most important Italian architects, Renzo Piano, known throughout the world, now proposes a political motto: the suburbs are the “cities of the future”, or “metropolitan cities” *tout court*, where young people, who cannot benefit from the opportunities given by historical centres, therefore pursue their dreams, and hunger for things and emotions found elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> This does not seem to be the case from this drawing: here the verbal-visual discourse barely shows any degradation of land and gains a poetic value when this young man, with all the variables and contradictions related to the process of growing up, painfully reflects on the disharmonic changes at his place of origin.

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<sup>22</sup>The original text: “Ho rappresentato come luogo d’origine la casa dove sono nato, ho passato la mia infanzia, e ho vissuto fino ai 15 anni. È situata in campagna, ora nella prima periferia di Modena. È per me molto carica di significato, per le esperienze e le contraddizioni che ho vissuto in quella casa, a proposito di spazio mi impressiona ogni volta quanto nella mia memoria quel posto fosse enorme ed invece ora lo percepisco come minuscolo.”

<sup>23</sup>Renzo Piano has created a working group called G124, which is commissioned to observe and monitor the Italian suburbs, which is also referred to as “rammendi del tessuto urbano” (“mending the urban fabric”) and “fabbriche di desideri” (“factories of desires”). The first issue of the magazine *Periferie* can be downloaded from the link <http://renzopianog124.com/post/103631277378/periferie-n1-diario-di-un-anno-di-rammendo>.



**Fig. 16** Ragusa

In the case of Sermide the damage could be reconstructed, the embankment rebuilt, the community healed; in this drawing of the suburbs of Modena, memory does not restore, it only accuses, and the prevailing sentiment is that of a traumatic uprooting. From the perspective of an anthropology of places, as proposed by Descola, here the inspiring ontology is mostly *totemic*, with the large house chosen as representative of the family group, a summation of a (now lost) personal and collective identity. Around the deposed totem, all reality, natural (fields, trees, rivers) and man-made (houses, railways, bridges, roads), seems to co-exist in a senseless way: it is not known *for whom all this will exist*, and in fact no living being, human or animal, has been represented.

Some damage provoked by urbanisation can be less devastating but equally interesting, as in the case of a map collected at the University of Oregon and drawn by a young man from Ragusa (southern Sicily) who is finishing his doctorate in the United States. In the drawing we see, on the right, the old and Baroque part of the city, Ragusa Ibla, and on the left the new part, where among other things the young man's house lies (Fig. 16).

What you notice immediately is the drastic reduction in the density of the figurative representation of the new part: apart from the football fields, which obviously had an important value for the young man and are therefore dutifully recorded, the rest of the new city is reduced to a network of streets that partly overlies Ragusa Ibla (from point of view of height, the latter is on a hill slightly lower than the one where there is the new centre of Ragusa). The new Ragusa was built in the eighteenth century together with the reconstruction of Ibla after a dreadful earthquake. It has a lot of beauty, but its urban design is rather geometrical. Ragusa has been enlarged a lot in the last 40 years and its suburbs may be thought as ugly if compared with the New Ragusa of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and with Ragusa Ibla. The damage



Fig. 17 Postcard of Avezzano before the earthquake

that was inflicted on this area has therefore to do with its readability. As Lynch says, the imageability of our cities and of our environment is an integral part of our identity: whether we live in anonymous places or places made anonymous by models of development that do not maintain the link with the history and style of that particular environment, we find ourselves living as foreigners in a lost land. The drawing of this young man tells us that the urban development of his city has led it to progressively become a *non place*, the term given by Marc Augé: a place without an identity, purely functional, such as shopping centres or airports (Augé 1992). If the house beneath the Modena ring road became a *terrain vague*, here we have the contrary, a hyper-functionalisation of the city, at the expense of other factors, such as the ritual or aesthetic, that inspired the creation of the churches, gardens, and noble palaces in the old baroque city. The discourse is made all the more interesting when you consider that this young man has lived for several years in an area, Oregon, far, both in geography and landscape, from his own. In his memory, the streets, houses, and everyday places of Ragusa have faded away, leaving only the strong core identity of the old town, apparently less personal but rather more persistent than the strictly autobiographical: a demonstration of the power of the *collective image of the city*, as claimed by Lynch.<sup>24</sup>

Other interesting comparable examples instead relate to natural disasters, and in this case earthquakes. The first is one that struck back in 1915 in Avezzano, a town in the province of L'Aquila and the capital of the Marsica. In the paper that the female student produced for the exam, she compares the town square before the earthquake of 1915 with the square after it (Figs. 17, 18).

<sup>24</sup>On this aspect of the “monumentalisation” of places cf. Sect. 3.



**Fig. 18** Postcard of Avezzano after the earthquake

The map drawn by the young woman in the classroom does not, however, show any reference to this territorial injury, seemingly it was felt to be too distant in time to affect the enunciator (Fig. 19).

Equally in the drawing, the other traumatic event suffered by Avezzano does not appear in any way, namely the draining of Lake Fucino (completed in 1878) to obtain the flat farmland which takes the former lake's name, an event which she instead refers to extensively in her written paper. On the other hand, the drawing shows a cemetery, as you can see at the top right, a figurative element rare in the corpus, and the text on the back says:

I represented what in my place of origin has been and still is most important. I wish I could give more emphasis to the city itself, but unfortunately since the earthquake of 13.01.1915, Avezzano no longer has a historical centre. I mainly depicted mountains and countryside, since I spent most of my time there with my grandfather. I know that the cemetery may seem an ill-suited choice but it is of particular importance as xxxxxxxx [incomprehensible] for me. Greenery is the thing that I love and miss the most in my city.<sup>25</sup>

This verbal-visual discourse of Avezzano unravels then into three very different strands: one documentarily and objectively in the paper, which is not relevant here; one graphically, in which the added elements are strictly personal (the garden, the

<sup>25</sup> This is the original text: "Ho rappresentato i posti del mio luogo d'origine che sono stati e sono ancora i più importanti. Avrei voluto dare più rilievo alla città stessa ma purtroppo dopo il terremoto del 13.01.1915 Avezzano non ha più avuto un centro storico. Ho raffigurato principalmente montagne e campagne poiché ho passato la maggior parte del mio tempo lì con mio nonno. So che il cimitero può sembrare una scelta poco consona ma è di particolare importanza poiché xxxxxxxx [incomprendibile] per me. Il verde è la cosa che più amo e che più mi manca della mia città."



Fig. 19 Avezzano in the student's map

house of her grandfather, etc.); and one verbally with the text on the back, in which there is mention of the earthquake as the cause of the destruction of the historic centre, and therefore its absence from the drawing (“Avezzano no longer has an historical centre”). This is not the only absence, since the death of one or more loved ones is mentioned in the written text and also in the drawing because they have probably been buried in the cemetery represented. The young woman at first wanted to name these people but she changed her mind soon after (“as xxxxxxxx”). Together the two omissions (the image of the earthquake, offset by the written narrative; and the words about dead relatives, offset by the pictorial presence of the cemetery), form an interesting “chasm of loss”, where visual and verbal languages express some features only intermittently, alternately hiding and revealing collective loss, a diminished imageability of the area (because of the earthquake long ago); and personal loss, a sort of diminished imageability of the emotional world (because of the death of one or more loved ones). This example, like the previous one at the outskirts of Modena, allows us to understand how each case constitutes a unique configuration, where some characteristics are comparable with those from other discourses (that is to say a semantic constant, such as that of the/damaged land/ discussed in this section) but also specific variables that make each of these verbal-visual discourses on origins, a personal and unique form of expression.

Very different from the previous examples, but still dealing with an earthquake, is the case that we will see now that concerns the L’Aquila earthquake of 2009. This recent catastrophic event still has a considerable impact on the depiction of the place of origin, as in this picture where a girl from L’Aquila marks out with a pronounced

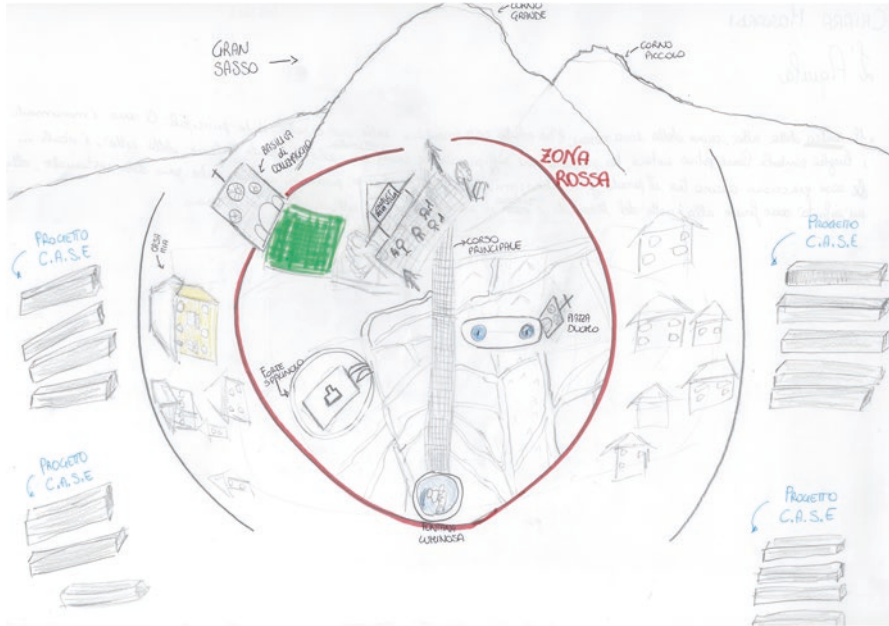


Fig. 20 L'Aquila

bright red circular line a so-called “red zone” (“zona rossa”), that is, the mainly off-limits old town destroyed by the earthquake (Fig. 20).

The text on the reverse says:

The centre [the underlining is in red] of the city, the heart of the red zone, I wanted to represent in its main features. There are monuments, landmarks. You will notice how I preferred not to show the homes in the centre, only the many roads of the city, the narrow streets ... The houses still lie between the past and the future; I'll explain: some, unfortunately still very few, have been rebuilt, others, countless numbers of houses have not been rebuilt since the night of the earthquake and remain still waiting, like us citizens of L'Aquila, for a future.<sup>26</sup>

We can note that, at the level of the enunciation strategy, the phraseology of the interlocutor (“you will notice”) makes the discourse lively and heartfelt where the intentions are explicitly stated (“I wanted to represent”). It is a powerful way of communicating, the subject is conscious of the importance of her argumentation which emphasises the highly problematic condition of the place of origin, through both graphical and verbal expression: the topological construction is through

<sup>26</sup>This the original text: “Il centro [la sottolineatura è in rosso] della città, cuore della zona rossa, l'ho voluto rappresentare nelle sue caratteristiche principali. Ci sono i monumenti, i luoghi simbolo. Come potrà notare ho preferito non raffigurare le case del centro, ma solo le tante arterie della città, i vicoli ... Le case giacciono ancora tra il passato e il futuro; mi spiego meglio: alcune, purtroppo ancora poche, sono state restaurate, altre, un'infinità sono ferme alla notte del terremoto e sono restano in attesa, come noi cittadini aquilani, di un futuro.”

concentric circles that, in addition to representing figuratively the various areas of the city, symbolically evokes the wave of the earthquake's impact. The plastic choices,<sup>27</sup> chromatic and topological (the use of the colour red; the schema's incorporated elements/incorporating elements) are responsible for conveying the pathemic component of the discourse (alarm, fear, discomfort) while the eidetic choices suggest a contrasting meaning, which Semiotics calls *semi-symbolism*: clear, orthogonal lines to indicate reconstruction: confused, poorly drawn lines, and overlapping curves to indicate the parts of the city that "still lie between the past and the future". What is very important is the placement of the girl's house between the red line marking the destruction and the outside, the rebuilt periphery. Again, this topological construction is invested with symbolic meaning: the enunciator's place of identity is located quite close to that of the destruction but also far enough away to allow the enunciator to talk about it. In other words, the girl puts herself in a physical place which is an ideal ethnographic one where the observer-describer, in the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss, finds himself at the *right distance* to do his job: not too distant physically and culturally from the culture that he has to understand, but not so immersed in it so as not being able to focus on it. From the perspective of the anthropology of places described by Descola, this seems a case of *analogism*: in the chaos created by the earthquake, the subject recreates a meaning establishing analogies, and expresses them visually through chromatic, eidetic and topological rhymes. Even the resistential presence of people portrayed inside the red zone is interesting in this regard: the girl wanted to keep the anthropic value of the destroyed place, leaving open the question whether those people frequented the park *before* the earthquake or *now again*, 7 years after it. This lucid discourse, at times meta-discursive, on the damaged city of L'Aquila is also typical of an analogic attitude which is highly constructive towards reality: according with this ontology, significance relationships do not pre-exist but must be re-traced and, in the case of images, traced. The map we have just considered plays in a subtle way with the plastic levels and, in more depth, on an aspectual effect of *temporal suspension*, such that this entire verbal-visual representation of L'Aquila could be defined as a "discourse of waiting". Its meaning is organised in *complex terms*, which sum up several opposites: / before + after /, / inside + outside /, / rebuilt + destroyed /, / inhabited + uninhabited /, / in transition + frozen /, with an attempt to delimit and emphasise at the same time the chaotic place of the destroyed city centre. Once more, in this case personal experience is interwoven poetically with the collective one, reflecting it and being reflected by it. However here, compared to other discourses on damaged places treated earlier in this section, there emerges a stronger argumentative and objectifying need, intended to make the interlocutor reflect on a given situation. Even the emotional component is distinctly utilised with a political tone. This aspect

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<sup>27</sup>In visual semiotics, *plastic* organisation means the organisation of lines and contours (*eidetic* level); colours (*chromatic* level) and the distribution of the visual elements in the space of representation (*topological* level), regardless of the recognisability of the figures. For example, at the *topological* level, we can consider a pyramidal arrangement of elements both in a painting representing a crucifixion or in a representation of a mountainous landscape.



was widely developed in the work that the student later produced for the exam, in which she outlined all the measures taken by the town committees for the redevelopment of the city.

### 3 The Place of Origin as Utopia

In the previous section we looked at those maps, focused on the axis of social space, that presented the place of origin as highly problematic from the natural, anthropological or urban point of view, while in this section we will discuss another type, focused on the individual axis: those places of origin shown as Edenic places, the stage of a totally or partially lost happiness. In fact, as the psychological analysis of the corpus shows well, the subjects often have ambivalent feelings towards their places of origin (see Mazzeo, *infra*). But to provide a classification we are forced to rely somewhat on “pure” types, such as maps filled with happiness, like the ones that we will cover here; or maps that are distinctly conflictual, such as those that will be dealt with in Sect. 5.

As mentioned in the “Introduction” to this book, the majority of the locations shown relate to happy experiences. The concept of “origin” mentioned in our request to the subjects (“draw a kind of map of your place of origin”) recalls the same idea, from Gaston Bachelard, of a protective space, by definition, with a completely unique nature, of an almost immemorial happiness, fixed once and forever in a given portion of space. Bachelard, in his *La poétique de l'espace* (1957), says that “these investigations would deserve to be called *topophilia*. They seek to determine the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love. For diverse reasons, and with differences entailed by poetic shadings, this is *eulogized space*.”<sup>28</sup>

Different cultures and languages articulate this experience of belonging and domestic intimacy in many ways,<sup>29</sup> literary works, poetry, paintings from different periods and various cultural areas describe to us in many similar ways this place where we, among other things, performed a fundamental formative human activity: the daydream, the *rêverie*. A student of the University of Rome drew her childhood village, Torre del Greco, writing, on the back of the sheet, the reason she represented it in this way: “What I looked at whenever I was lost in thought, looking out the window of my house.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Bachelard, p. 31 of the English edition (1969). The rest of the quotations from this book are also from the English translation.

<sup>29</sup>For example, the German *Heimat* not only describes the place of childhood, but also the special feeling of security and happiness that we connect to our origins, and the perception of having lost such membership. *Sehnsucht* in Italian is translated as *nostalgia*; in English there is *homesickness* and *nostalgia* for this feeling; for the object of these feelings there is *Homeland*, *Birth Place*, *Country of origin*, *Home*, etc.

<sup>30</sup>The original text says: “Ciò che guardavo ogni volta che mi perdevo nei pensieri, affacciata alla finestra di casa mia.”

Only after doing the drawing, making the short commentary, and engaging in the various forms of deeper discourse, have the subjects then moved onto that secondary elaboration that Bachelard calls “resonance” (*résonance*), with a propagation of memory on different levels of personal and collective life. But at first, during the solitary and introspective experience of the drawing, people clearly experienced the phenomenon that Bachelard calls *retentissement*, a kind of inner reflection that “invites us to a deepening of our existence”.<sup>31</sup> This philosopher, in his reflections on domestic spaces, also makes us understand why, despite us asking the respondents to draw “a kind of map”, in many cases they have only drawn their home or little more, anchored in an emotional certainty more than a cognitive one:

Before he is ‘cast into the world’, as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our *daydreams*, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact, this simple fact, all the more, since this fact is a value, an important value, to which we return in our *daydreaming*. Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house. (*op. cit.* p. 7)

We can push a little further perhaps and advance the hypothesis that those who drew their place of origin in this way, as a happy island, were perhaps the most willing to confidently communicate something truly personal and intimate about themselves. The birthplace, the places where they were happy as children, are something more than a set of environments, they constitute a “body of dreams” more than just a template for our subsequent imaginative habits.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in memories, often this place tends to be not only euphoric but also fantastic, “lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past.” (*op. cit.* p. 15) This ensures that many of our maps are quite similar to those in which fantasy lands were represented. Umberto Eco dedicated his magnum opus *Storia delle terre e dei luoghi leggendari* (2013) to the topic, that is full of illustrations that have sometimes surprising similarities with our maps. As the author specifies in the “preface”, in this work he does not intend to deal with fictitious places, such as those from novels, but rather lands and places that in the past created chimeras, illusions because many people really believed they existed or had existed somewhere. And this is also the case with our drawings, which, while unrealistic, still retain a link with the actual place where the person remembers they spent the first years of their lives. For example, there is the drawing of a girl from Piane D’Archi, in Abruzzo: in every way it resembles the medieval and Renaissance *hortus conclusus*.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> P. 12 of the English translation. In English the terms have been translated in a different way from those of the original French. If “*résonance*” becomes “resonance”, “*retentissement*” sometimes becomes “repercussion” and sometimes “reverberation”.

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, p.15: “The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming. And often the resting-place particularized the daydream. Our habits of a particular daydream were acquired there.”

<sup>33</sup> The example in Fig. 21 is from the sixteenth century and refers to the legend of the fountain of youth (shown in Eco 2013, p. 144). I thank the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo for their kind permission to publish this image.



**Fig. 21** Piane D'Archi

The world represented is colourful and lively, where everyone appears happy and intent on pleasurable activities like playing sport, playing music, singing, and chatting under a warm sun in a cloudless sky crossed by a flock of birds. Again, the location where we are situated as spectators is the same: we are witnessing the scene from a slightly frontal perspective that is a little raised, that allows us to understand the perspective of the buildings and the landscape behind. As Louis Marin (2006) says, the articulation of spaces, frames, and architectural representations are not only a decorative issue but have the power to articulate and give greater or lesser importance to the various aspects of the stories through images. In the drawing here, thanks to the comments of its author, we know that the rearmost coloured part refers to a different space-time than the scenes depicted in black and white in the foreground. That is, the spatial and chromatic organisation translates into temporal planes. Moreover, despite the naivety of the graphical design, which could have been done by a child rather than an adult girl, we see traces of almost all the senses (sight, hearing, touch, kinaesthesia; but not taste, something represented by food and drinking in the *hortus conclusus*), a sign that the drawing relates not to a place lived but to a living place, captured in its *here and now*, a present for a series of people and animals. It is a multidimensional space, which can still be traversed (by bus, by bicycle, by the gesture of throwing a ball), in whose aerial medium the notes coming out of the window of the church spread out. We can also read the scolding of the teacher “state zitti” (“shut up”) shown in the speech balloon in the upper right. The presence of dogs, cats and birds in this drawing, as a living totality, allows us to rule out the possibility of a *naturalistic* representation in the sense Philippe Descola gives to this term. For this anthropologist, the naturalistic ontology, a product of the



Fig. 22 Hortus conclusus

modern age, excludes that human interiority, the ability to judge, also belongs to other elements of the environment, such as things and animals. In this drawing, on the contrary, we do not notice any separation between the sphere of the human and the mass of the non-human, but rather their equal and harmonious coexistence: the parental figures that look at us from the door of the house are similar to the cat, the dog and the children, who for a moment look at us as well, interrupting their game in amazement in finding us, beings from another space-time. On our side, we are

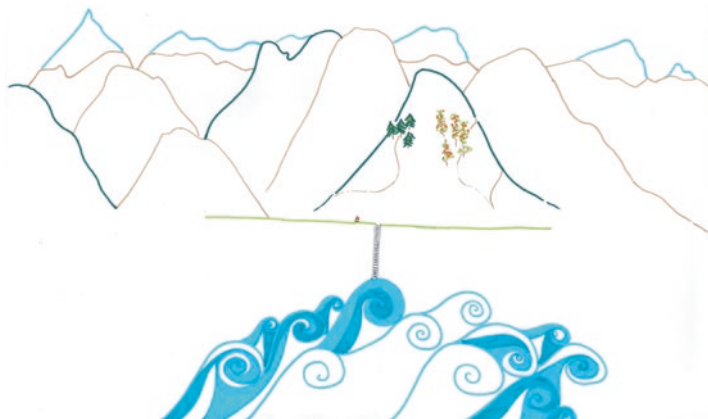


Fig. 23 A poetic discourse

immersing ourselves in their utopian island suspended from all space and time, as Louis Marin points out in an article dedicated to the representation of the *Utopia* island imagined by Thomas More.<sup>34</sup>

According to the famous aphorism of Lev Tolstoj, happy families are all alike, while unhappy ones are unhappy, each one in its own way. In our examples this is not the case, with each drawing of a happy place of origin appearing happy in its own way. For example, the drawing from a subject at the University of Udine-Pordenone in no way reproduces the joyful living and multisensory nature of the previous image, yet places the house, in its infinite smallness, at the edges of two equally fantastic places, joined by a very improbable ladder. As Bachelard points out in the seventh chapter of his *Poétique de l'espace*, a miniaturised fantasy is something quite typical in fantasy literature, and is a sure sign that every geometrical contradiction is resolved and the representation is dominated by the imagination. In this sense, the drawing in Fig. 23 is euphoric and utopian, because the representation there is liberated from any obligation to comply with scale, a liberation that marks every process of the imagination. Bachelard says that “Poets learn to know the primal germ of flowers in the gardens of tininess” (p. 163) We do not know why in the imagination of this young man there is this great fantastical polarisation between a mountainous and vertical world and a marine world below that yearns to join the former, but the presence of the house and the ladder affirms a capacity for mediation and an affirmation that makes this primeval world a world of infinite possibilities.

This drawing manages to construct a poetic discourse on the place of origin, like others that we will see in the following paragraphs. Unfortunately, in the drawings gathered at the University of Udine-Pordenone, often the expertise in the drawing of

<sup>34</sup>“Le moment et l'espace proprement utopiques, n'ouvriraient-ils pas précisément un lieu sans lieu, un moment hors temps, la vérité d'une fiction ?” (Marin 1985, p. 43).



**Fig. 24** Agrigento

the future *designers* has become an element of opacity rather than transparency, as the subjects were often concerned with the graphical quality of the drawings rather than their expressiveness.

There are cases in which ancient models, from of a believed cultural golden age, have determined the degree of idealisation in these representations. This seems the case in the drawing, from the University of Rome, by a young woman from Agrigento. As we know, this city has one of the most beautiful archaeological sites in the world, with virtually intact temples of Magna Grecia, yet shamefully threatened by property speculation. The author of the drawing, however, blends harmoniously the new part of the city with the oldest part in a framework which has itself an old design. For example, if we compare the drawing with the famous fresco of Akrotiri, we will see that here the Edenic vision derives from an art-historical matrix associated with the place of origin (Figs. 24 and 25).

In many more trivial cases, people from tourist areas have reproduced a kind of postcard of their place of origin, as we shall see in the section dedicated to monumental places (Sect. 4).

The verbal discourse has been engaging in very subtle and sometimes paradoxical games with the images,<sup>35</sup> so that the words sometimes specify and emphasise the

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Marin (2006). A paradoxical case recalled by Marin is that of the *Annunciazione* by Benedetto Bonfigli (1455–60) in which St Luke, intent on writing the part of the Gospel concerning the Annunciation, is portrayed literally sitting between the archangel Gabriel and the Madonna.



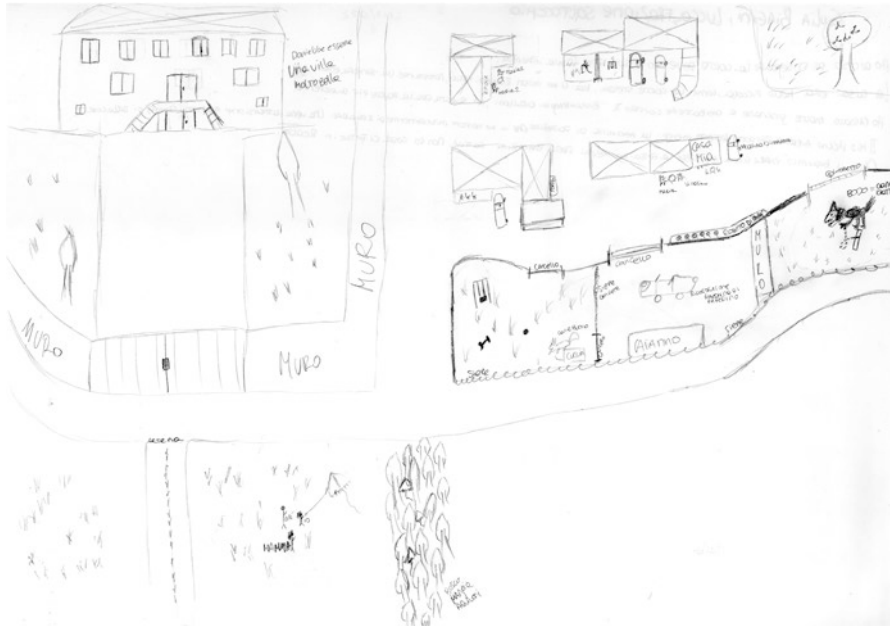
Fig. 25 Akrotiri (open source image)

significance of the images, but in other cases they radically transform the meaning, or initiate ways of interpreting that would have been difficult to identify only on the basis of the images themselves. Even in the brief commentaries on the drawings there often emerges this strong link with a nostalgic place that, as Bachelard points out, is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.<sup>36</sup> Now let us look at some of the comments on those drawings where this idealisation of places, or their reworking in a fantastical way, prevail. This, for example, is the commentary that accompanies the drawing shown in Fig. 26, representing a small part of Saltocchio, a village near Lucca:

I decided to draw the courtyard where I lived during my childhood. The house was very small, like the courtyard itself. But there I have many happy memories, despite my tender age. I spent many days fighting against the ‘forest eating kites’. But this was the most fun part, my neighbour had perfectly reproduced the car of Donald Duck which I tried miserably to reproduce. A real attraction for all the children of the courtyard. My father said that beyond the forest there was the lions’ den for naughty children. I do not know what was really there.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup>“For our house is our corner in the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word”. (p. 4).

<sup>37</sup>The original text is: “Ho deciso di disegnare la corte dove ho vissuto per la mia infanzia. La casa era molto piccola, come la corte stessa. Ma lì ho molti ricordi felici, nonostante la tenera età. Ho passato molte giornate a combattere contro il ‘bosco mangia aquiloni’. Ma questa era la parte più divertente, il mio vicino aveva riprodotto perfettamente la macchina di Paperino che ho tentato miseramente di riprodurre. Una vera attrazione per tutti i bambini della corte. Oltre il bosco mio padre diceva che c’era la fossa dei leoni per i bambini cattivi. Non so cosa ci fosse in realtà.”



**Fig. 26** Saltocchio

Sometimes feelings of attachment or detachment towards the place of origin are evident just on the basis of the drawing, while at other times, as in this case, the verbal commentary is crucial in order to understand just what the drawing is telling us. The map of Saltocchio has a urgency in its story-telling that is clear already from the writing within the drawing: “cane buono” (“good dog”), “cane cattivo” (“bad dog”), “ricostruzione della macchina di Paperino” (“reconstruction of Donald Duck car”) etc. If the fantastical valence is fundamental in one of the designs that we commented on above, where there was the miniaturisation of the house between the mountains and the sea (cf. Fig. 23), here the graphical representation is realistic, and it is the commentary that promotes the idea of a fantastical sense to the images.

Sometimes the euphoria of the place has an eminently affective nature: it is not the beauty of the place or the stories to which it is bound that give it its utopian character, but the very nature of the place of identity, the “nest” mentioned by Bachelard. This is the commentary of a young woman who drew Bagnolo in Piano, a town in the province of Reggio Emilia, commenting as follows:

I was born and raised in Bagnolo where I still live, it is a very small village so we feel a bit like we all belong to the same family. The area that I represented depicts all the elements I feel are part of my place of origin. The coloured places are the places that I consider most important. Since childhood I have always lived in the village, my house was sort of my base and from there I went out every day and encountered the village. La Ca 'Rossa has always been a crucial place, it is the restaurant where I always went during my childhood. I have many memories, all beautiful, of this place. The restaurant is still a fundamental part of my



life as I now work there. Since I was born the staff has always remained more or less the same and one person in particular is now part of my family. Another important place is the bar (Maura) that I often go to. Maura is connected to the restaurant thanks to the person I mentioned earlier. Kevin and Giuly have always been my best friends and I consider their home as if it were also mine a little bit. The coop [a supermarket, Ed.] is essential because it is another meeting place in the village and the place where my mama works. I drew my house in more detail because it is the centre of everything, and a big house where I played as a child and where I have the most memories, with my family and friends.<sup>38</sup>

Here is another commentary in which the unconditional attachment to the place of origin is emphasised. It was written by a young woman from Casalecchio di Reno, close to Bologna:

In my drawing I have represented the places dearest to me and of which I could not do without. – my house in Casalecchio di Reno – the home of my grandparents at the beginning of the portico of San Luca: I spent most of my childhood at their home – thanks to what I have engraved in my mind, the Villa delle Rose Park, where I always went with my grandfather while grandmother was cooking at home. –San Luca: I could not do without this basilica: I see it from my house, from my grandparents' house, from the motorway when I return to Bologna. Not seeing San Luca would be like not seeing my house.<sup>39</sup>

Expressions such as “the coop is essential” or “San Luca: I could not do without this basilica” can raise a smile, but speak of strong roots that allow a continuity between the childhood of these girls and the present young women at the University in Bologna. The continuity here is euphoric in itself because these people do not have to face the trouble of adapting, they experience themselves as still linked to a place where affection and protection is found. We will see in Sect. 5 that in other cases staying in a place is instead a cause for discontent, while in Sect. 6 we will come across cases where there is a co-membership of multiple places or a displacement from their own place of origin that are far from negative.

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<sup>38</sup>The original text says: “Sono nata e cresciuta a Bagnolo dove abito tuttora, è un paese piccolino quindi sentiamo un po' tutti di appartenere alla stessa famiglia. L'area che ho rappresentato raffigura tutti i punti che appartengono al sento facciano parte del mio luogo d'origine. I luoghi colorati sono i luoghi che ritengo più importanti. Fin da piccola ho sempre vissuto molto il paese, casa mia era un po' la mia base e da lì tutti i giorni uscivo e incontravo il paese. La Ca' Rossa è sempre stato un luogo fondamentale, è il ristorante in cui con i miei andavo sempre da piccola, ho moltissimi ricordi lì, tutti bell bellissimi. Il ristorante è tuttora una parte fondamentale della mia vita perché oggi ci lavoro. Da quando sono nata lo staff è rimasto sempre più o meno lo stesso e una persona in particolare è parte ormai della mia famiglia. Un altro luogo importante è il bar (Maura) in cui vado da sempre. La Maura è collegata al ristorante grazie alla persona di cui parlavo prima. Kevin e la Giuly sono i miei migliori amici da sempre e sento casa loro come se fosse anche un po' mia. La coop è fondamentale perché è un altro luogo di incontro del paese e il luogo in cui lavora la mia mamma. Ho disegnato casa mia più in dettaglio perché è il centro di tutto, e una casa grande in cui ho giocato da piccola, dove ho la maggior parte dei ricordi, con la mia famiglia e con gli amici.”

<sup>39</sup>“Nel mio disegno ho rappresentato i luoghi a me più cari e dei quali non potrei fare a meno. – casa mia a Casalecchio di Reno – Casa dei miei nonni all'inizio del portico di San Luca: ho passato gran parte della mia infanzia a casa loro – grazie a ciò ho impresso nella mente il parco di Villa delle Rose, dove andavo sempre col nonno mentre la nonna cucinava a casa. –San Luca: non potrei fare a meno di questa basilica: la vedo da casa mia, da casa dei nonni, dall'autostrada quando torno a Bologna. Non vedere San Luca sarebbe co me non vedere casa mia.”



**Fig. 27** Outskirts of Tehran

If we look now at the drawing of a female researcher of Iranian origin, collected at the University of Oregon, we find ourselves faced with a very different type of happiness: that of the “buen retiro”. This adult woman after doing her colourful drawing, where no living soul appears, explained orally that she remembers this home on the outskirts of Tehran as an Edenic place where periodically, during her childhood, she did not have to share a crowded city apartment but could sit in peace and quiet. When I noted however that the smoke coming from the chimney testified to a human presence inside the house, she made it clear that it was simply a reference to the good food she ate during those holidays in the countryside (Fig. 27).

In this case we find yet another version of utopia: the happiness of the escape, the negation of everything that disturbs or does not satisfy us. This colourful house is suspended, uncertain between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality, without humans, resembling one of the many islands of utopian fiction, like the flying island of *Laputa* in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, or the *Neverland* of Peter Pan. However, here as well, as in the minimised utopia between the mountains and sea, we see a well-marked path that goes “out of frame” and comes to us who are looking at the drawing. As nicely summarised by Victor Stoichita (1993), the framing

**Fig. 28** Papua New Guinea Child (Courtesy Blake Everson)



is a crucial device to determine the very meaning of what is represented visually. In this drawing, as in several paintings studied by this famous art historian, we have on the one hand a setting in a precise frame that gives a defined representational status for the image but, at the same time, the red pathway invades the observer's space because it ideally extends itself towards this space. Also, the fountain that we see in the foreground is interrupted halfway and ideally extends itself into a space which is outside the represented one. In this case the analysis of some formal structures of the drawing are not at all restricted by form, yet it tells us something important about the level of content: a place (represented) in which there is an absence of human beings and of which, verbally, although it was stressed the positive value of a "solitary place", contains paradoxically a bridge towards us who are looking at it. Utopia is therefore not so much being on a happy island as being able to come and go, in an episodic, intermittent way, to a stay in a *buen retiro* in fact, and not in a permanent hermitage. The frame of the drawing itself lies more in the regularity of its invisible edges than in an actually designed border: it is a sort of "suggestion" of a frame, which remains substantially open, however. As clearly shown by Bachelard in the chapter devoted to the dialectic between inside and outside (Bachelard 1957, chap. IX), the phenomenology of the poetic imagination allows us to explore the human being as a surface that separates the region of oneself (*même*) from that of the other-self (*autre*), between the beings who want to manifest themselves and the beings



Fig. 29 Harmonious unity of creation

who want to hide themselves: “[...] the movements of opening and closing are so numerous, so frequently inverted, and so charged with hesitation, that we could conclude on the following formula: man is half-open being.” (p. 222).

The final example of a place of origin represented as a utopian place, refers to another, additional type of utopia, the ancestral one which dictates a profound unity of the cosmos. According to the definition of Descola, this type of ontology is defined as *animism*: for animism, which still characterises many regions of the planet,<sup>40</sup> animals, plants, spirits, and objects are seen and treated as people, intentional agents with a soul. Their bodies are seen as simply coatings which cover a similar interiority. Visual representations produced by animist populations will therefore tend to attribute human predicates to various elements that are not human, for example rocks with faces drawn on them or bears covered by clothing. Humans for their part will have a mutable appearance, for example they cover the body with paint or costumes in which the human body alternates with other animals, or mimics that of non-human beings.

Since our designs represent a childlike world where, not infrequently, the subject acknowledges this indefinite fusion with animals and objects (Jones and Cunningham 1999), especially those used for playing, we have had many cases of “animism” in our representations. I use as an example here one where there appears a particularly strong equivalence between the human and non-human, given its frontal perspective and dimensional homologation, that importantly equates, spatially, animals and objects (Fig. 29). One could observe that in this drawing there

<sup>40</sup>In this regard, the French anthropologist mentions the Indians of the Amazon, the north of North America, the northern Siberian peoples, and some peoples from South East Asia and Melanesia (Descola 2010).



Fig. 30 Turin

are no humans, but this is not true when you consider that the bicycle and the tub are objects that are defined by their use by people. It is also interesting that the bat and the bee are in the area of the house, as if inhabitants of it, while the deer is placed at the top of the sheet, in the middle of the vegetal part outlined in green, underlining the increased distance between this wild animal and the life of the house, of which it still remains a part.



which seem to trace a kind of image lodged in commonality rather than personal experience. If everyone had done this, our body of evidence would be made up of a number of “views”, and would not have been much more interesting than a collection of postcards. What is the characteristic, or series of characteristics, which made us classify some of these maps under this thematic label (not a small number either, about 20% of the sample)? First of all, there is the emphasis given to the monuments of the city or home region. We see, for example, this map of Turin by a design student from the university of Udine-Pordenone that reproduces, in an almost professional manner, the Mole Antonelliana and other urban elements of the Piedmontese city:

We note that the young man has contextualised the city within the region by making it emerge, using a zoom, from the abstract design of the surrounding area, including the borders with Switzerland and France. On one hand, therefore, there is an internationalisation of the place and the observer (“you who come from France take a moment to come to Torino”; “you who come to Turin can also visit Switzerland within a few hours drive”, etc.), which could come from a tour guide or a promotional site of the town. In a case like this, the place of origin is represented not as an experienced environment but as a system with notable points, coming from a different perspective than the personal one. In general you could also say that these people feel they have to make the most of the place from which they come by constructing it as a *brand*. Such a detailed design makes me also suspect that the student has copied from a photo. It is no coincidence that the design students in particular have produced maps of this type, as their degree program teaches them to use their graphical capabilities for marketing purposes. The drawing is organised through landmarks, an abstract relationship of a juxtapositive kind (*mythogram*), rather than through a narrative link between represented elements (*pictogram*). We see for example this map, again from Udine-Pordenone:

It is a tiny village in the province of Pordenone, Barco, and Fig. 32 also shows the actual church, as observed in the photo on the website of the municipality. Again, the accuracy of the drawn image and the similarity between it and the photo, makes you suspect that the student has consulted the internet during the execution of the design, in this case the picture you see above. But here, unlike with the previous drawing, we do not have an artifice of magnification, but an overlay.<sup>41</sup> The mythogramic composition, with elements placed on various spatial dimensions of the irradiating type (Leroi-Gourhan 1964–65), relates to both monumental and private features: the monument to the fallen of World War I in the background, in miniature at the top right, suggests a temporal distance but at the same time a living presence at the level of collective memory judging from the foot soldier’s hat in close-up, complete with a bullet hole. Very much present in the foreground and not shown frontally but with an aerial view, there is a football field, presumably where the young man played and had fun throughout his childhood. Conversely, in the upper left of the image there is the classical geographical map that establishes the relationship with other towns in the surrounding region, evidently felt to be near to

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<sup>41</sup> On the different methods of editing of elements within these drawings, see the contribution by Enzo D’Armenio, *infra*.

**Fig. 32** The actual church of Barco



their place of origin. An art history scholar would perhaps see a *caprice* in this composition, namely a pictorial (or musical) art form, very much in vogue in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which consists of an improvised fantasy, in which the author freely move from one theme to another.

But what is the overall message given by this map? On the basis of objective verifiable factors, we can see a clear preponderance of an ecclesiastical element, which should not surprise us since the Veneto is a region where the Catholic church has a very strong influence, and where every single town, even the smallest, draws its identity and its visual physiognomy from the parish church. The church is therefore a kind of logo for Barco, onto which historical (time) and geographical (space) specifications are embroidered. The figurative elements, such as the infantryman’s hat and the football field, each recall a kind of struggle: that of war, bloody and militaristic; and that of sport, with its regulated ritualised aggression. So perhaps very far from the *intentions of the author* of the drawing, and yet very readable from the *intentions of the work*,<sup>42</sup> several values can be inferred from this drawing such as: the condemnation of war, seen as bringer of death but also of honour (the war memorial); competitiveness during a life of peace as a subliminal continuation of

<sup>42</sup>For a distinction between *intentio auctoris* and *intentio operis* see Eco (1990).





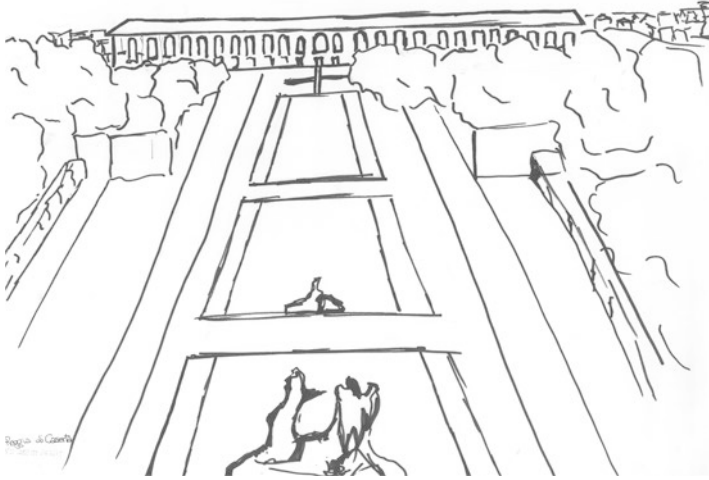


**Fig. 34** Dancing students

This African student who is fluent in French and speaks a decent Italian, was attending university in Italy with the intention of settling in France with her young husband after graduating. For her, the place of origin has a salience that is of the post-colonial type: the institutions, languages, and education in a school of a Western type. Proud of such a membership (see for example the many national flags in the drawing), it seems, however, that she picks out from her place of origin only those elements that project it towards Europe. In this case it is these institutions, the last bastion of a colonial past, that constitute the represented “monuments” because they are also the ones that provide the subject with a step to the West that it is not a step into the unknown.

In the later work done for the examination, the Cameroonian girl added photographic materials, among which there were both the image of her high school, the European school, and local specificities, as students dancing on the annual festivals in the school premises, subdivided by tribal membership, each with their own clothing and bodily decorations (Fig. 34).

This case, within the whole corpus, is unfortunately the only one in which the interviewee appears, despite everything, so far from western culture. One of the future possible developments of this research could be this: to go and see how people coming from Asia or Africa, for example, are willing to represent their place of origin. In the meantime, we can refer to Sect. 6, dedicated to the co-membership of multiple places, that calls into question a Eurocentric view of the world, in the light



**Fig. 35** *Reggia of Caserta (1)*

of the theories of the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in particular. It is significant, however, that the question again emerges with regard to the monumentalisation of places, since their construction is based on a collective and shared image. So cultural variables play a crucial role, if not actually ideologies, as in the case of Barco discussed above.

A drastic reduction of the place of origin down to a single monument is found in two cases, collected respectively at the University of Udine-Pordenone (Fig. 35) and the University of Rome La Sapienza (Fig. 36).

In these two drawings the famous Reggia di Caserta almost completely dominates them. It is remarkable that two people who do not know each other at all, and that come from this Campanian city, have both interpreted their place of origin so radically. There are obviously a lot of differences, one is more stylised, the other more detailed for example. But the perspective in both cases is aerial, the surroundings non-existent, and above all the personal part of the place is also non-existent, a part that would have been inherent for individual life experiences during childhood. If we use the categories of Descola (2010), it seems that this may be a case of *totemisation*: even though in traditional civilizations, the totem, in the overwhelming majority of cases, consists of an animal that becomes a symbol of the clan, Descola does note that it is not the animal itself that represents the community, but a semantic prototype which belongs both to the animal and human community that chose that animal as their totem. In this sense, the Reggia di Caserta can act very well as a representative totem of a community that wants to recognize itself in its features of lavishness, artistic quality, wealth, and nobility. A region that often appears in the news for organised crime, toxic waste pollution, or unemployment comes to be represented by omitting these wounds and extolling the glories of the

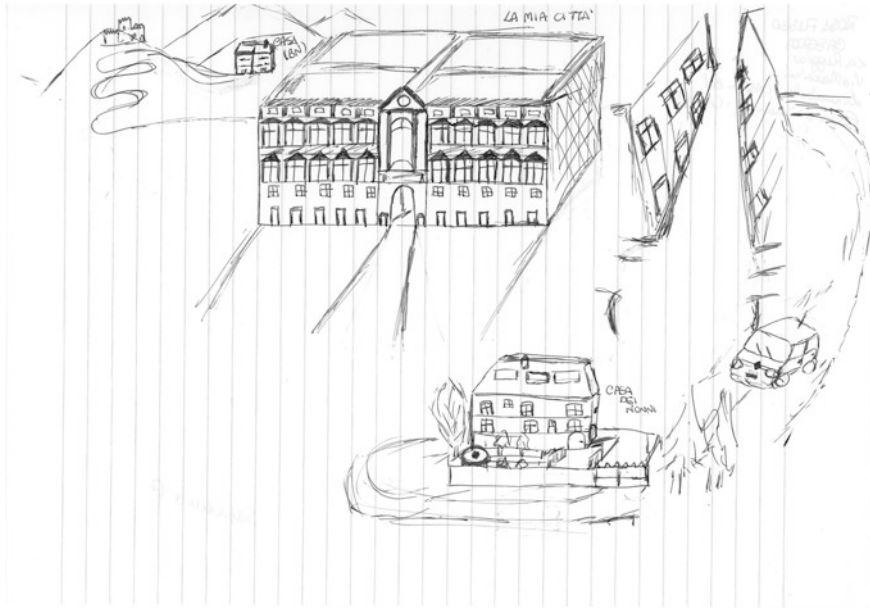


Fig. 36 *Reggia of Caserta (2)*

past. The Palace is, in this sense, a very strong temptation for the people who have to draw Caserta, given the fame and the objective magnificence of the building. In cases like these the monumental map seems to act as the flip side of the wounded territory map (see Sect. 2). The monumentality of the place acts, in this case, not like a construction of the place as a brand, nor like a political-ideological manifesto, but like a smokescreen to hide the flaws of a place instead. Every aspect of private life is eliminated in these maps, while in others, although they concern the same geographical area with the same problems, good and evil are represented as equals. We can see, as a non-monumentalised representation of Naples, the map in Fig. 37. In a living tapestry that gathers the public and the private, featuring both “fat cats” (“fighetti”) of the bourgeoisie and young Camorra members; the endemic traffic alternates with cats in love and places of play. This drawing, gathered in Bologna, thus constitutes a counter-example to both the representation of the wounded place and of the monumental place. The good and the bad, the monumental and the private are added together, they live together, and are harmoniously framed by natural elements, like a sea stubbornly batheable despite the pollution, and a Vesuvius that is for the moment not erupting with ash and lava. A design like this is not even an Edenic map (see Sect. 3), but, like the map of L’Aquila analysed in Sect. 2 (Fig. 20), it achieves what in semiotics is called a *complex term*, that is a semantic term that combines and exceeds the starting opposition: a little Edenic and a little wounded, a little monumental and a little private, this verbal-visual discourse on Naples seems



through a very circumscribed set of semantic traits.<sup>46</sup> For this reason it is important that the place, as the product in marketing logic, is recognisable, and distinguished from other analogous places (*product positioning*). To reach this goal, some features of the place are magnified that render it recognizable. According to art historians it is with the *vedutismo* that scenery is portrayed in such a way that the places are identifiable, and the technique of the camera obscura somehow anticipates the camera. As Victor Stoichita says,<sup>47</sup> towards the beginning of 1600, especially with El Greco, there begins a tendency to represent cities in such a way that their most important monuments are in evidence. In the famous painting *Panorama of Toledo* (1595, Metropolitan Museum of Art), El Greco emphasises the Alcázar and the Cathedral without attaching any importance to their geographic relationship, as he reverses the actual position of the two buildings, because what matters is their symbolic value and their role as a ‘brand’ of Toledo. Even more interesting for us is the other picture of El Greco, analysed by Stoichita, *Panorama and Plan of Toledo* (1610–14, Toledo, El Greco’s House) in which, in the lower right corner, we see a young man who unwinds the plan of Toledo, at the bottom of which it is explained that it was necessary to move some buildings in the image to give a better and clearer idea of the city.

In our corpus of images, we can sometimes find an opposite objective, abstract style. The draughtsman does not replicate El Greco’s freedom in changing the position of elements, but rather represents the place with a zero degree of reworking, as in this map of the town of Montescaglioso (Fig. 38), which is very similar to the Google Earth map (Fig. 39).

The location here is highly identifiable not so much by virtue of buildings and monuments, as by virtue of the total respect, in the drawing, for its morphology and surrounding environment. Great care for identifiability, even with an explanation of elevation, are also found in a map, collected from doctoral students, of an area of the city of Trento (Fig. 40). This case is also interesting because its author has realized, after several weeks, that she had been unconsciously inspired by the map from the famous television series *Twin Peaks* (Fig. 41). This short circuit between personal and encyclopaedic memory is very interesting for the Semiotics of culture.

In this drawing of Trento, the enunciator is not obscured, as in the previous case, in fact many things are explained but there remains a very strong intention, typical of this type of map, to render the place as such, and not in relation to the subject that was born and raised there.

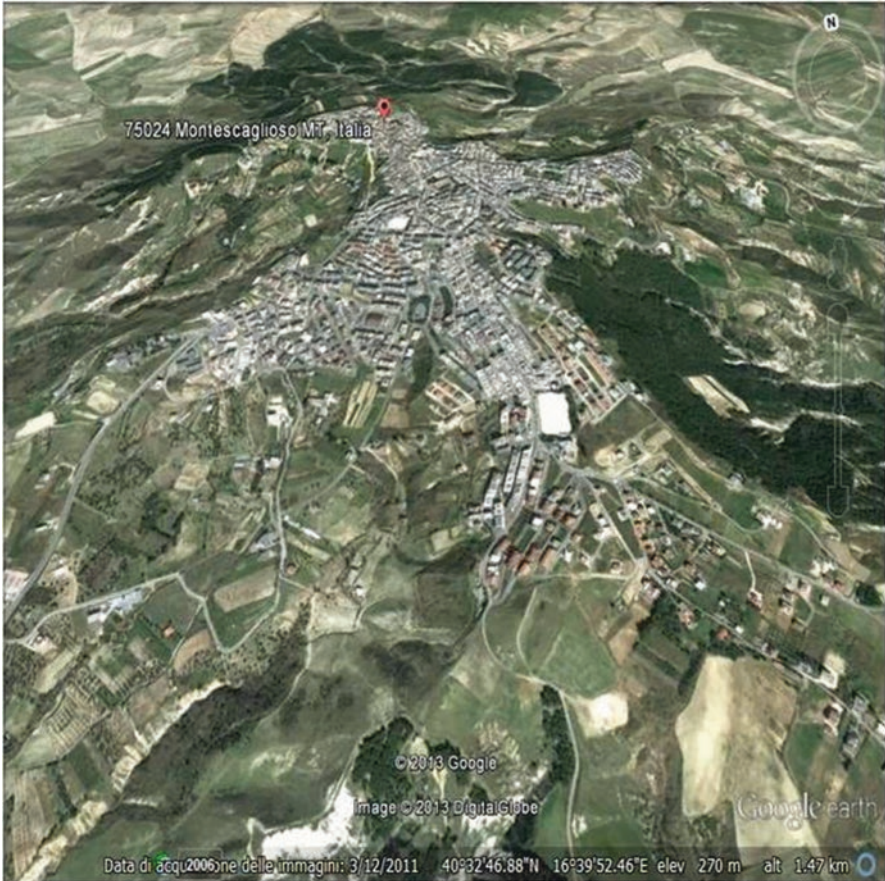
A frequent case is that of tourist areas that are reduced to postcards. The view of the city is the most stereotypical, often devoid of human beings, as in this representation, collected from the University of Rome, of the most touristic district of the city of Syracuse, Ortigia (Fig. 42).

This foreshortened view, taken from the street during a walk or a trip in the car, suggests the influence of a *picturesque* eye, a notable view that must influence and

<sup>46</sup> On the construction of the commercial brand as a *bricolage* of elements and as a discourse, cf. Floch 1995 and Marrone 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Stoichita 1993, particularly Chap. 7 Pictures, mirrors and maps.





**Fig. 39** Montescaglioso on Google Earth Map

impress tourists, without any care, in this case, for realism. The same can be said for this representation of another seaside town, this time in Calabria, Siderno:

The town is exclusively represented as a bathing spot, thus the subject identifies their place of origin with the valuation that others can give it, in this case the temporary guests of the tourist season.

An amusing example is that of the island of Lesbos, drawn in Bologna by a Greek student on the Erasmus program, a representation that is somewhere between comedy and fantastical geography:

In conclusion, these types of maps are dictated by the desire to make a place recognisable and enhanced according to an impersonal logic, “of someone” (“l’on” in French), as Jean-Claude Coquet (2008) says. According to this semiotician and his “phenomenological linguistics” there would be various degrees of assumption of the utterance from those who enunciate. In other words, there would be not only





Fig. 40 Trento

the formal enunciation positions (I, you, he), as expressed by Benveniste, but also some *enunciating instances* (subject, quasi-subject, no subject) depending on the degree of self-attribution of responsibility, by the subject of enunciation, regarding what is being said. We have seen very well in our drawings these different existential positions from the subjects, whose authors sometimes sing the praises of their childhood; but at other times, as in the cases considered in this section, limit themselves to reporting the discourse of the other, “what *is* known, *is* seen *is* thought” of their place of origin. Instead of talking about themselves, these enunciators set themselves up as a *quasi-subject* who offers to the enunciatee an impersonal product (a postcard, a plan, a monument-*pars pro toto*, “significant elements” that characterise the place through a brand logic). Monumentalisation is a kind of idealisation, sometimes in ideological terms, sometimes in aesthetic or commercial terms. In this sense, the monumentalisation of the place has something in common with the utopia of the place, but on a collective rather than on an individual level. To achieve this idealisation, the subject plans his/her own removal as a subject in the representation.<sup>48</sup> And that is why you cannot find, in the drawings of this section, any genuine poetry: even when an aesthetic dimension is apparently evoked, it is always stereotypical, linked to common sense. The Swiss semiotician Jacques Geninasca calls

<sup>48</sup>Of course there are borderline cases, where the insertion of monumental elements is balanced by autobiographical ones, but when attempting a classification we above all need to take into account the purest examples of one type or another.



Fig. 41 Twin Peaks

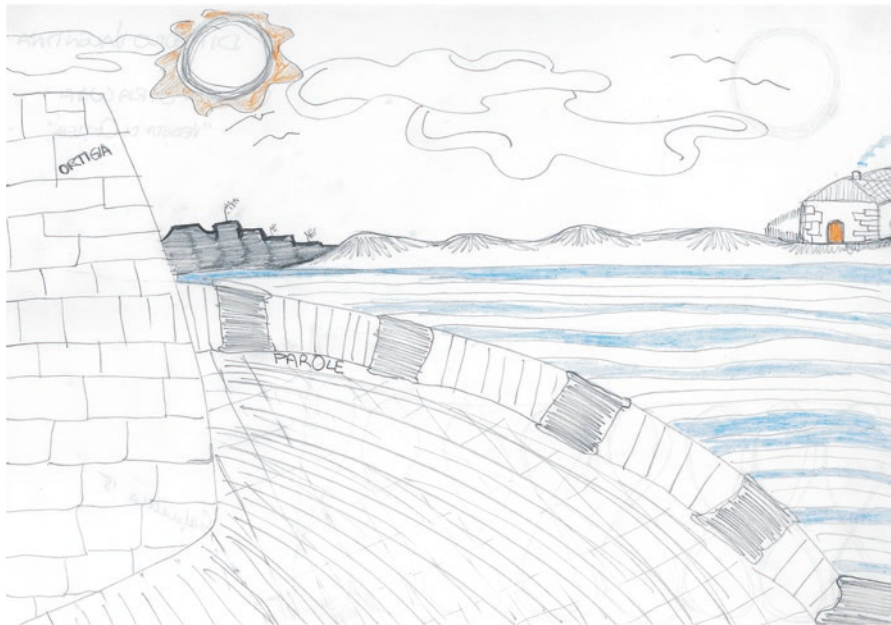


Fig. 42 Ortigia

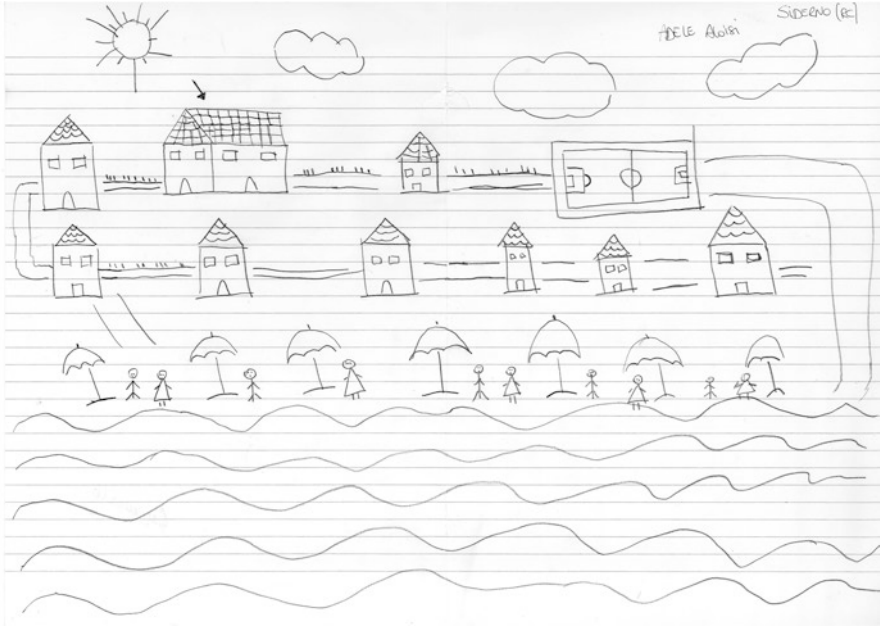


Fig. 43 Siderno



Fig. 44 Lesbos

this type of interpretation *saisie molaire* (molar apprehension), which is based only on encyclopaedic elements, and for this reason it would lie outside aesthetic enjoyment, as strictly defined.<sup>49</sup>

## 5 Negated Places

So far we have assumed that the subjects knew what their places of origin were and that, albeit in different ways, they agreed to represent them. In the last two sections, however, this certainty will be questioned. In the next section (Sect. 6) we will see cases in which subjects are uncertain about their belonging because, either alone or with their family, they have moved geographically, and therefore feel that they actually belong to more than one place. We did not encounter cases of radical de-territorialisation, of a *nomadic subjectivity*, to borrow a term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980), but in a significant proportion of the sample the feeling of not being rooted in a specific place was detected. These people derive their identity from a relationship between several significant places, speaking, through their drawings, about paths more than places.

A frequent phenomenon of nomadism on a smaller scale is that of co-belonging to the parental home and the grandparents' house: we have not listed these cases under the heading of genuine co-belonging that we will cover later, but there is no doubt that the well-known familist culture in Italy, with stable family ties between generations, means that children are often brought up by their grandparents and that the towns and the houses of the latter compete with the family home for the primacy of place of origin. If we had based our classification on the figurative material of the drawings, we would have found, as a general constant, the home of the grandparents, playgrounds and a myriad of largely domestic animals (mainly dogs, cats, rabbits and chickens) that in many cases turn out to be the true childhood friends of these people. In some, not uncommon, cases the animals seem to be the only survivors from a place of origin, which lack significant people and have no real identity. In the image we see in Fig. 45 the family house has not been drawn, even though subjects had been expressly requested to do this.

Can we say, from this map, that there is a rejection of their place of origin? The design could be tantamount to a linguistic act of denial, such as: "I deny that that is

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<sup>49</sup>According to Geninasca there are three ways to get a sense of an aesthetic text: the *molar apprehension*, the *semantic apprehension* and *impressive apprehension* (*saisies molaire*, *sémantique*, *impressive*, respectively). The first consists of the reconstruction of the encyclopedic reference of the text; the second in the meanings that result from its internal structure; the third in sensitive and emotional resonance, especially on a rhythmic basis, that the work provokes in its audience (Geninasca 1997). If I limit myself to analysing a work reconstructing only its cultural references, says Geninasca, I lose the unique characteristics of the text and the sensitive component of its fruition.



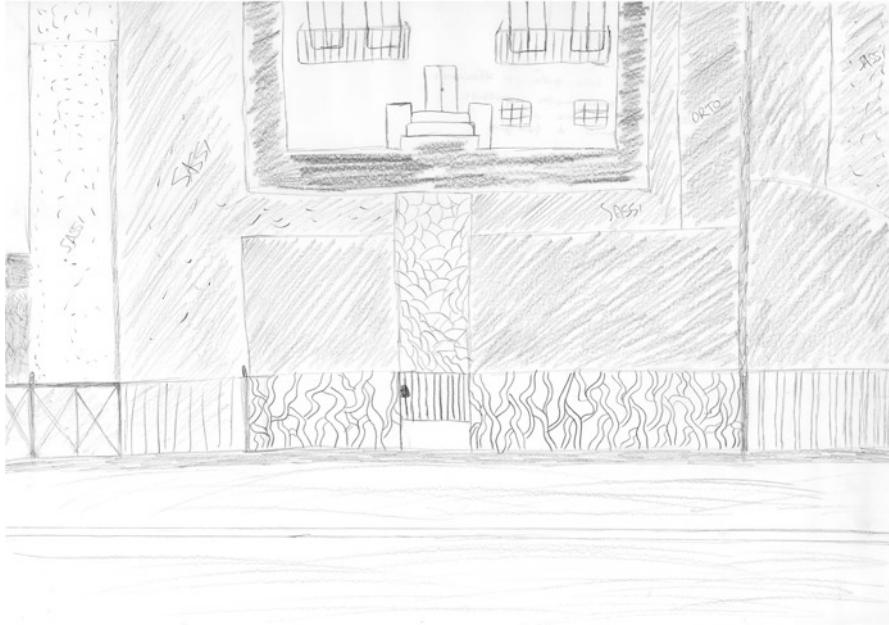
**Fig. 45** No people represented

a significant place for me.” Or else: “I do not recognize the specific place as my place of identity”?<sup>50</sup> Or is it a simple act of omission?

It would not be right to generalise, it is much better to verify examples like these case by case, even with the help of verbal comments (written and oral) on the drawing. A negative experience is sometimes completely undetectable when the subject does not show or say anything which can function as a cue. An exemplary case is constituted by this drawing, in which nothing in particular can be recognised (Fig. 46).

This is certainly not an Edenic place, there is a strange dual view, frontal and plan, and an emphasis on inanimate elements (stones, named several times as such; an iron fence). But an important figurative omission became clear from the commentary: the person who drew this map, looking at it again with me, realised that he had omitted one of the front windows and immediately provided an embarrassed explanation: “Well, of course, I have not drawn it because something bad happened in that room.” (“Beh, certo, non l’ho disegnata perché in quella stanza è successo qualcosa di brutto”). In this case we have a negative experience of the place but a positive experience, of trust, towards the interviewer, since the respondent spontaneously adds a small autobiographical confession. We must therefore distinguish two types of negation: some have refused to draw their place of origin or have done so in an omissive way because they have a problematic relationship with it; others have refused the task in and of itself, perhaps in defence of their privacy or simply

<sup>50</sup>In the aforementioned essay by Louis Marin on urban cartography, the French semiotician attempts an equivalence between maps and linguistic acts. For example, he sees a kind of assertiveness in writing and captions included in maps.



**Fig. 46** Omission of a front window

because they wanted to avoid the fatigue that the task entailed.<sup>51</sup> In those cases we know nothing of the experience of the subject concerning their place of origin, we only know that they do not want to represent it for us, as in this map.

It is a playful pastiche of pictorial quotations and postcard-like views of Rome glossed below by some small writing in brackets: “but this is not a serious thing” (“ma non è una cosa seria”). It is evident that in such cases the subject of enunciation does not adhere to its own utterance, that is intended as ironic and not representative of their feelings towards the place where they built their identity.

Fortunately we did not have many cases of explicit refusal to co-operate, even if certain highly deficient maps can be considered either a polite way to evade delivery or as products from individuals who have a form of rejection towards their place of origin. For example, when a lot of white space on the paper is left, this surplus space of representation, with respect to what is represented, is like a kind of silence, of renunciation, of *ellipses* of the discourse (Genette 1972), which relegates the part not expressed into insignificance. It was found, at least within this corpus, that people who commented on their place of origin in a negative way, as a rule had represented it graphically with large empty areas, as in the map in Fig. 48.

<sup>51</sup>There is a certain difference of disposability depending on the survey conditions: there is no doubt that when some of us have asked their students to make the maps, these people have felt compelled to comply with the task, when it was their own teacher to assign it. In the case that we will see shortly, and that is depicted in Fig. 47, the student from Rome saw me for the first time and evidently did not feel any “moral obligation” to comply.



**Fig. 47** “Not a serious thing”

Psychology has its own criteria for reading the uneasiness of the subject, for example it detects the type of graphic tract (cf. Mazzeo, *infra*). Semiotics can at most undertake an analysis of the discourse and has an easier job when uneasiness is verbalised, as in the map in Fig. 49 in which the subject graphically negates the familial place by putting a cross over the words “Home ‘sweet’ home”, by putting in quotes the adjective “sweet”, and, conclusively, by writing<sup>52</sup>: “Il luogo non mi lega, le persone mi possono far sentire a casa” (“places do not bind me, people can make me feel at home”). Interestingly, despite stating that people are important, he only depicts a cat. In the statement “il luogo non mi lega” (“places do not bind me”) one might even glimpse an epochal callousness for places that, according to Meyrowitz (1987), characterises our existential situation constantly de-localised by electronic media. And young people especially undoubtedly feel much less the physical link with places since they live practically connected to the net and communicate with each other through social media.<sup>53</sup>

When in the area of collective semantics of territorial damage (cf. Sect. 2) we found a lack of areas of environmental figurability (*imageability*) due to urban degradation or natural disasters for example; in the cases studied in this section, moving onto individual semantics, there seems to exist areas of existential “not

<sup>52</sup> It is shown that we in the West read figures from left to right according to our reading habits. All that appears to the right then is a kind of conclusion to what we have seen previously on the left. In fact here the writing on the right is to comment on the graphical elaboration to the left.

<sup>53</sup> We will see how social media have an important role, especially the connection between geographically distant reality, even in the case of migrant subjects (Sect. 6).

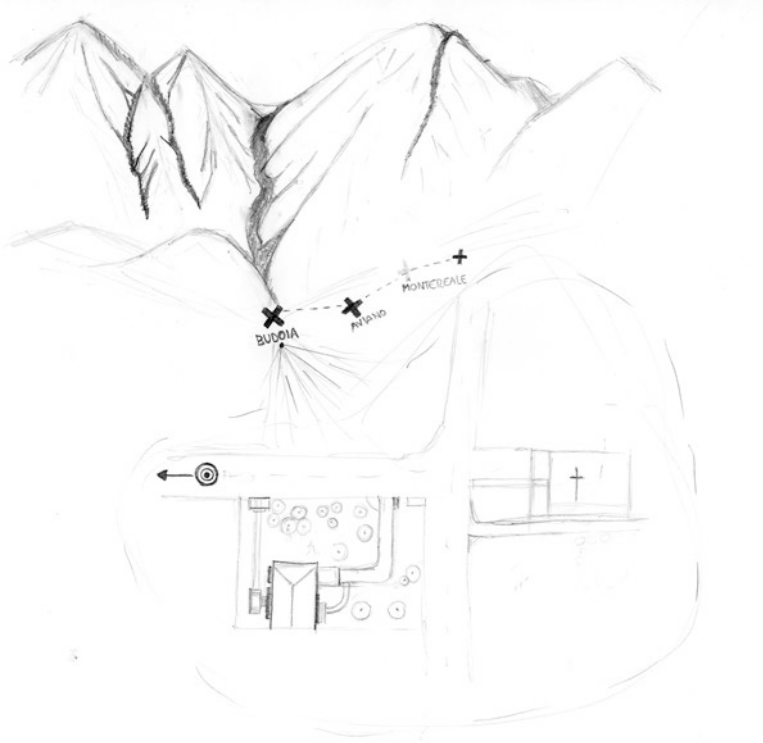


Fig. 48 Empty areas

imageability”.<sup>54</sup> Francis Bacon expressed this sense of loss of significance by erasing with a sponge some parts of his paintings, and producing an effect which, in his famous study of the painter, Gilles Deleuze calls “zones of the Sahara” (Deleuze 1981). Thus, in the maps of our subjects, with a metaphor that perhaps the geographers of the group would like, we occasionally find these indeterminate areas where the phrase “hic sunt leones” could be written. In a certain sense, even the figurative *clichés* of monumentalised places (Sect. 4) are a way of renouncing, by the author of the drawing, the representation of anything personal. But in that case it appeals, in a substitutive way, to a cultural unit that replaces a lived, subjective, memory. Not very different is the map in Fig. 50 by a young man from Pordenone, who draws a totally different house from his own, and writes: “As a place of origin I take the structure of an American home because as a child I would have liked to have lived there” (“Come luogo d’origine prendo la struttura di una casa americana perché fin da piccolo mi sarebbe piaciuto vivere lì”):

<sup>54</sup>After all this it is not far from the theories of Lynch who tied health and personal happiness to the aesthetic quality of the lived place.



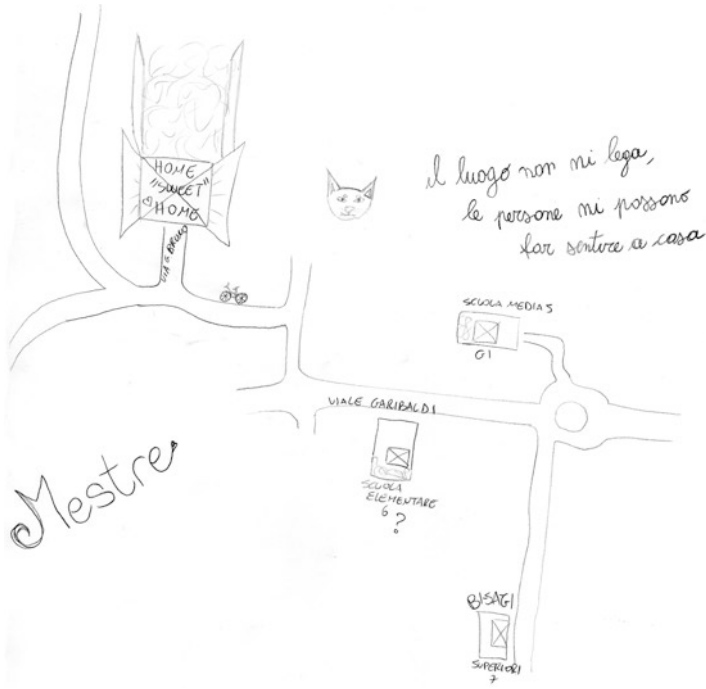


Fig. 49 "Places do not bind me"



Fig. 50 Rêverie: "an American home"

The place of childhood as a place of *rêverie* mentioned by Bachelard, of which we have spoken at length in Sect. 3, is expressed here in a replacement of the actual place of origin with an imagined, desired one. Memory is modified by inserting elements of pure imagination, the selection of a history of another possible self, or a rewriting of what should have been but was not.<sup>55</sup> It is a case of *autofiction*, a genre defined for the first time by Serge Doubrovsky (1980), in which the autobiographical style and fiction are combined in a paradoxical way.

But there are also substitutions of the place of origin with another real place that the subject knew in later periods of their childhood, and which were chosen as their own place of origin because it was more important, or more acceptable, or better for defining their sense of identity. For example, a transgender student refused to represent his region of origin, where he had felt stigmatised and isolated, and insisted on representing a quarter of the city where he currently was at university and where he finally felt accepted. We see in these cases that the negotiation of what is to be conceived as “place of origin” is more problematic. Obviously, we all remember the places of our childhood and we know exactly where they are and what characteristics they have. So when somebody shows difficulties in representing them, it always involves denials, transpositions, or omissions. People always let their imagination run when depicting their places of origin, but the cases covered here should be seen as especially negative representations, and distanced from the memory of the real places. Our maps, and the comments that accompany them, are never a sort of photograph of places and when they seem to be, as in the case of Fig. 51, a form of subtraction is readable: even if very detailed, in this image there is a lack of an existential depth, of a memory not merely photographic, of an emotional valence tied to space. The richness of detail tells us that this place is well remembered, but the respect for perspective and the absence of living things and movement make this representation objective, establishing the site as a purely virtual one.

A totally different and opposing case to those of the negation of the place, is this in Fig. 52.

What the subject has elected to present in this drawing is a moment of his life in the childhood home: the dog is running, the hammock is swinging, some leaves are emerging from the foliage of the tree because of a breeze. As Claude Lévi-Strauss says in *The Savage Mind* (1962), there are artists that capture an attitude, an expression, a light, a situation in which the object represented in its evolution combines structure and accident. The lace ruff which appears in the portrait of Elizabeth of Austria, painted by François Clouet and kept at the Louvre, appears, to the anthropologist, as a good example of an object that provokes its own aesthetic emotion because it was meticulously reproduced in its structure and at the same time read from a very dynamic and subjective point of view. The elements appearing in Fig. 52 are similar, the author has created a fixed drawing, as in a freeze frame, a specific moment of his childhood life but it, in its absolute contingency, feels like an eternity

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<sup>55</sup> On the theme of autobiographical tales and their uncertain semiotic status, cf. also the collection of essays in Giliberti (ed.) 2009.



**Fig. 51** Objective representation

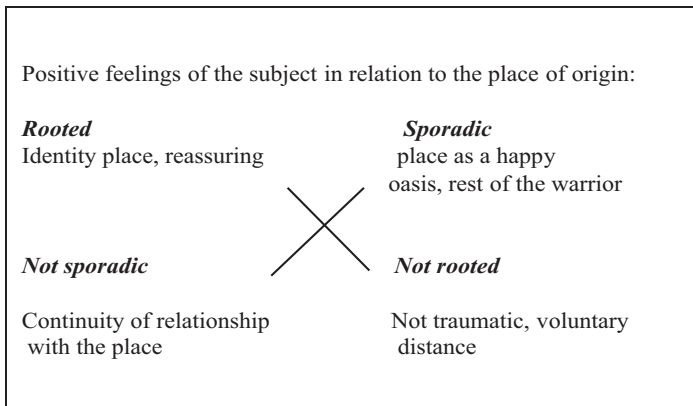


**Fig. 52** A dynamic and subjective point of view

and becomes exemplary of the subtle and articulated framework of the daily life of an era.<sup>56</sup>

We have seen, in earlier sections, the many different ways people can represent their place of origin when they do not have a negative attitude towards it: they can accept as their own burden the injuries which have struck the place (Sect. 2), or enhance its Edenic valence (Sect. 3); they can freeze it in a stereotype of collective appreciation (Sect. 4); or the subject may, as in the last case we have considered, make it present again in an evenemential representation.<sup>57</sup> But when the subject rejects the place of origin or refuses to talk about it, they condemn it to silence, to emptiness, or an ironic aggressiveness. And if, as we are reminded by Gaston Bachelard, the childhood home is generally the birthplace, the corner of the world in which we felt loved and cared for, it is easy to calculate the dramatic nature of this rejection.

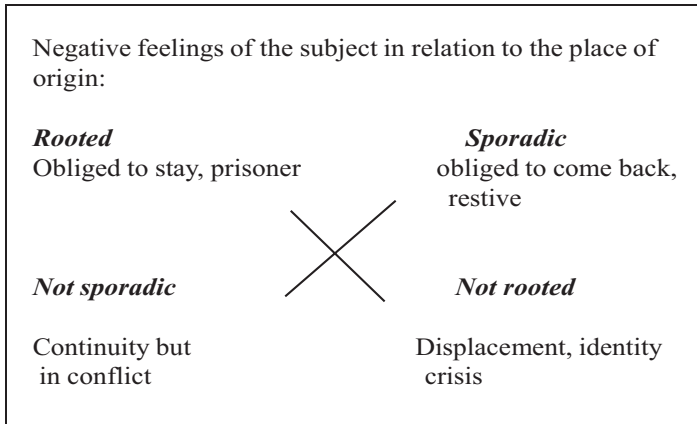
If we want to summarise in classic semiotic squares<sup>58</sup> possible feelings (Bennet and Luebbberman 1995), positive or negative, towards places of origin, we can hypothesise eight different positions:



<sup>56</sup>The world of everyday life, in Russian *byt*, as a system that maintains ties with the artistic sphere of the time, has been studied by Jurij Lotman in many of his works. Sometimes even in our maps, a lifestyle clearly emerges. In the drawing in Fig. 1.4.8: natural shady areas (tree) and artificial ones (tent), a well-kept garden where you can relax (hammock), sit (bench), and spend time with your pets, all with privacy guaranteed by the hedges and fence.

<sup>57</sup>A similar operation takes place when, through sign language, the deaf person identifies themselves in speech and gestures as if they were at the scene they are describing, as nicely illustrated by Murgiano in this volume (chapter “[Into the Map: The Re-enactment of Experience in Sign Languages’ Representation of Places of Origin](#)”). On the traces of movement in these drawings, cf. Nardelli, *infra*.

<sup>58</sup>This is the organization of any semantic category into opposite and contradictory relationships between its terms. For example: up/down are terms in an opposite relationship; not high/not low are terms in a contradictory relationship. This allows us to articulate any opposition in four positions (i.e. a square) instead of two.



We chose as a basic category the degree of rootedness in a place: this degree, depending on the case, may have a different degree of identification. For example, the ‘not rooted’ to the place of origin, which will be the focus of the next section, can be experienced both in a positive way, as a healthy distance, something voluntary or at least egosyntonic; or as an identity crisis of the subject who feels “tossed about in the world”, without reassuring references.

## 6 Co-belonging to Multiple Places of Origin

When we think in a simplified way about the concept of place of origin, the specificity of that appears certain. We are all born and spend our first years somewhere, sometimes our family moved when we were very young and then we will remember somewhere else as our place of early childhood, where we were not born, as the one in which we place our first memories. Most of the maps which we have gathered, and also their commentaries, confirm this. Especially in the group of young people who make up about 90% of the sample, we see a particular and persistent attachment towards their childhood place and a sense of continuity. So playgrounds are often represented together with the pub or the park frequented with friends in adolescence, because the feeling of belonging transcends the temporal plane, there is no truly separate childhood from the present day, only a single identity, which is also, above all, the identity of the place, represented as solid and identical in years.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup>A significant example, gathered in Bologna, shows the temporal planes following one another without any chronological order: “I wanted to emphasize just a few places and significant elements for me at Brugnera, the place where I have grown. Starting from home where I wanted to represent my two dogs, continuing with the two parks where I spent my childhood, playing with friends and peers. I wanted to represent the sports field of Brugnera where every year the village festival was and is held; in the nearby field I highlighted a small wooden bridge which from a young age I crossed with my cousins to reach the sports centre. I drew the house of my uncles, my grandmother

To recall the known contraposition between *place (lieu)* and *space (espace)* of Michel de Certeau (1980), in this case the places of origin are strictly *places*, meaning instantaneous configurations of locations which are different from other spatial configurations. They are not *spaces*, understood as intersections of mobile elements, defined by directional vectors, speed of tracing and temporal variables.

And yet we live in an age of migration and the university environment, from which most of this investigation comes, provides a rich group of case studies of people who have moved to study individually or, with family, for work reasons. Our corpus clearly reflects this reality through quite a few maps and related comments, that outline the place of origin as a space of *transfer* and of *transformation* more than a place of stable identity. In these cases, at least in those more extreme, it is useful to adopt a *perspectivism* on the analysis, something theorised recently in anthropology by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2009), where identity is given from a multiple perspective and in transformation rather than by fixed and classified categories. Viveiros de Castro problematises the western reading of the world, seen as a legacy of colonialism, and overcomes the distinction between a unique nature as opposed to a plurality of cultures. In fact, he says, every culture has its own way of understanding nature, for which we must speak not only of multi-culturalism but also multi-naturalism.

Even within this kind of map, as in the genres that we have described previously, there are significant variations that we will exemplify. Broadly speaking we found: (a) maps that bring to the fore a porous border between two worlds, in view of a directional reversibility; (b) maps showing a balanced state between different worlds, a situation often fostered by virtual links, via the internet; (c) maps that only consist of a series of paths, a bit like the maps of history books that illustrate the movement of an army or population through various territories; (d) finally, maps that speak of breaching borders and of an existential space of the subject that is unlimited and indefinitely radiating.

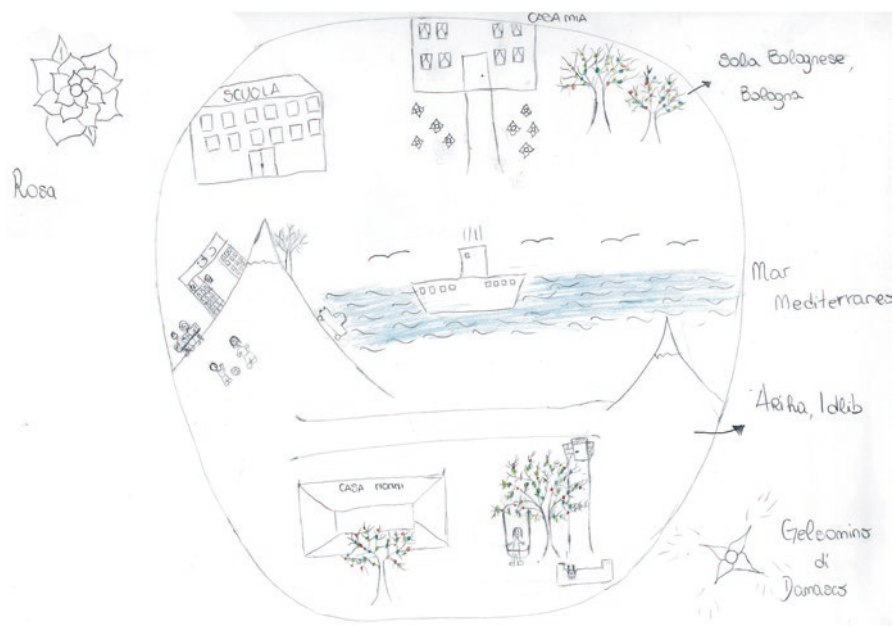
A perfect example of the first kind, is this map drawn by a university student of Syrian origin but resident in Italy with his family since she was a child (Fig. 53).

This is the text written on the back of the sheet:

Sala Bolognese and Idlib (Syria). I feel I have two places of origin, two lands that bring back to my mind the best moments of my childhood, and I cannot exclude either of these

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and my best friend for obvious reasons. Finally, the pub, the ice cream parlour and bar: meeting places with friends. I conclude with the little park in front of the house where I have drawn the swing made by my father and the electricity transformer room.” (“Ho voluto mettere in risalto solo alcuni luoghi ed elementi significativi per me di Brugnera, paese dove sono cresciuta. Partendo da casa dove ho voluto rappresentare anche i miei due cani, proseguendo con i due parchi dove ho trascorso l’infanzia, a giocare con gli amici e i coetanei. Ho voluto rappresentare il campo sportivo di Brugnera dove ogni anno aveva e ha luogo la sagra paesana; nelle vicinanze del campo ho messo in evidenza un ponticello in legno che da piccola attraversavo con i miei cugini per raggiungere il centro sportivo. Infine Ho disegnato casa dei miei zii, di mia nonna e del mio miglior amico per ovvie ragioni. Infine il pub, la gelateria e il bar: luoghi di incontro con gli amici. Concludo con il parchetto di fronte casa dove ho riportato l’altalena creata da mio padre e la cabina elettrica.”).



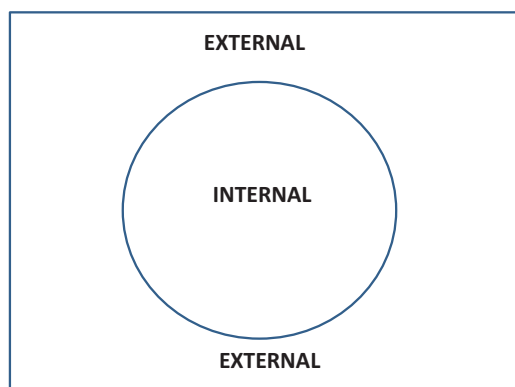
**Fig. 53** From Syria to Italy

places. So I decided to represent Sala Bolognese, the place where I spent my childhood, and Riha, province of Idlib (Syria) where I spent the best childhood summers. Both of these places have helped me to grow and to become what I am now.<sup>60</sup>

The rounded framing is like a porthole which excludes the view of all that is external to the memorised space (even the roofs of the houses are “cut” from this frame). In this way the author of the drawing represents a precise microcosm, albeit divided in two by a boundary that is designated as the “Mar Mediterraneo” (“Mediterranean Sea”), yet this is a completely unthreatening sea, and crossable with a comfortable boat. In addition the two places, Sala Bolognese and Riha, are each distinguished by a floral symbol: jasmine for Syria, the rose for Italy, so as to establish an equal beauty in diversity. This poetic element in the cartographic discourse has emerged several times already, for example in the form of lyricism or an attention to the compositional quality in the drawing. One cannot fail to emphasise again how the organisation of memory also works through the type of artistic method. In this case, the flowery and colourful trees occur both in the Syrian bottom part and in the

<sup>60</sup>“Sala Bolognese e Idlib (Siria). Io sento d’ avere due luoghi d’ origine, due terre che mi riportano alla memoria i momenti migliori della mia infanzia, e non riesco ad escludere nessuno di questi due posti. Così ho deciso di rappresentare Sala Bolognese, il luogo in cui ho passato la mia infanzia, e Riha, provincia di Idlib (Siria) in cui ho trascorso le migliori estati da bambina. Entrambi questi luoghi mi hanno aiutata a crescere e a diventare ciò che sono ora.”

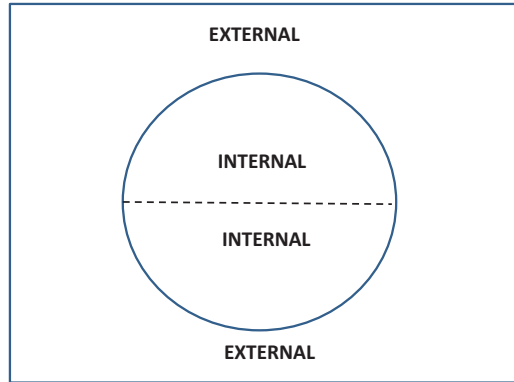
Italian upper part, establishing a rhyme<sup>61</sup> that, exactly as in poetic compositions, parallels and homogenises the content of the two *textual spaces* (Geninasca 1997). In other words, the two sections of the drawing function as two stanzas of a poem that speak of different things: the Italian “stanza” of school, of duties; the Syrian “stanza” of games, time spent with family, of excursion. But flowering trees, recurring almost identically in the two parts, make these two experiences analogous. Indeed, it should be remembered that the commentary says: “two lands that bring back to my mind the best moments of my childhood”. The sea, to continue with the poetic metaphor, is in this case a kind of *enjambement* in which the experience of a land merges and continues into that of the other. Identity here, even if twofold, is more complex than split, and this is witnessed by the frame that holds everything, suggesting a sharp boundary between the identity space and elsewhere that is irrelevant. This example could also be included in the section on Edenic places (Sect. 3) due to its idealisation, which shows the two places in perfect balance: the Italian house awash with roses, the Syrian vividly accompanied by children and animals, in a fantastic and playful system, which it is also manifested in the cheerful nonchalance towards proportions and perspective. Here we must take note where Bachelard says that every geometrical contradiction is resolved when the representation is happily dominated by the imagination. And yet this case also has an important anthropological significance, because this Italian-Syrian girl poses as a translator between two semiospheres, to use the language of Lotman: Sala Bolognese and Riha are still “two lands”; on the Syrian side there even appears a small inscription in Arabic as well as specific figurative elements both natural (snowy mountains) and architectural (tower). In the spatial metalanguage to describe different cultures (Lotman), the border between what is internal to a culture and what is external is usually represented as in the first one of the diagrams below. But the situation depicted in the drawing of the Italian-Syrian girl is better described as shown in the second diagram below:




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<sup>61</sup> It is a *figurative* rhyme, because it deals with the figures of trees, but it is also a *colour* rhyme, since they have the same colours, and an *eidetic* rhyme, since the trees have been drawn with the same form.





There is no forced entry from the outside of the border to the interior, nor a movement from the inside out, nor an unbalanced valorisation in favour of either of the two cultural spheres: the subject says she belongs to both. The topological location on the sheet – lower Syria, upper Italy, – does not carry any valuation with it, but is simply inspired by the cartographic convention that means the south is shown at the bottom and the north at the top. Finally, it is interesting to note the important series of omissions: the girl does not mention the terrible war that has bloodied her country of origin nor does she draw in any way what surrounds her cultural universe. The external of that culture is not depicted either as “nature”, nor as “other culture”, articulated differently (or not articulated at all, as pointed out by Lotman). Focused on the difficult balance between two worlds, the discourse of this girl evidently cannot afford to deal with other issues, which would not in any case be in consonance with the lyrical style chosen.<sup>62</sup>

If we consider one of the cornerstones of Lotmanian cultural semiotics, namely that every culture works essentially as a *unit* inside which the various systems of signs function, relying on one another, the perfect co-belonging of this subject to two cultures makes the multilingualism and polysystematics internal to each culture, even more complex. According to the rules of the school of Tartu, some texts are *metatexts* in that they represent provisions, regulations, and instructions through which a culture creates a myth of itself.<sup>63</sup> The texts we are considering in this section are just like this, in particular the map of the Italo-Syrian girl, which creates a myth of a perfect dialogue in which the *explosive*<sup>64</sup> dynamics do not occur even if two different cultural spheres are meeting.

<sup>62</sup> Each of these verb-visual discourses has a consistency of tone, which, like all semantic variables of the diffuse type (that is, depending on the overall coordination of the traits) is very difficult to describe in a brief analysis.

<sup>63</sup> Lotman et al. (1973). Cf. a similar concept in Marin 1994 where he speaks of the “transitivity of the map”, that is the fact that each representation speaks of the object but also of itself, and therefore the discourse that propounds the object represented.

<sup>64</sup> Lotman talks about *explosion* when a sudden cultural clash occurs when different cultures come into contact with each other. (Lotman).

But in other cases there seems to be, in the representations of these people, an imbalance between the worlds of belonging. The most common situation is that of persons of foreign origin who live for many years with families in a country other than their own and maintain only sporadic relations with their homeland, visiting it only occasionally or keeping in touch, via Skype and Facebook, with those who continue to live there. The internet creates a novel situation in the field of migration, a phenomenon which in the past often led to torment and permanent separations.

When we asked these people to design their place of origin, of course in most cases they have designed the place where they were born, and from which their family comes. But often that place was poorly remembered, or mythologised, for better or for worse. There actually arose two opposing positions: either an excess of narration or a lack of narration. In the first case, we can take, for example, the map of an adult researcher of Italian origin at the University of Oregon, who has drawn a map full of references (verbal) to specific episodes of his now distant childhood in Voghera, a map necessarily accompanied by a long commentary<sup>65</sup> in order to explain the anecdotes related to the various locations shown and the writing attached (Fig. 54). The relationship between two worlds, the current one in the United States, not thematised, and that of an Italian childhood, is characterised by *nostalgia*, an interesting semiotic sentiment because it mixes the pain of loss with the pleasure of remembrance (Greimas 1988).

On the contrary, young people, less prone to this kind of feeling for anagraphic reasons, have instead shown the relationship between their place of origin and their current one in a totally schematic way, as we see in the map in Fig. 55.

The most interesting cases of those teetering between two worlds, however, are those in which the bond is formed by social media. A Moldovan girl, for example,

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<sup>65</sup>I quote only a part of this commentary: “[...] La mia Scuola Elementare Dante Alighieri (e che altro?): ci ho passato solo un paio d’anni prima che ci trasferissimo ad Asti, ma la ricordo ancora con piacere. E ricordo anche la mia prima maestra, Anita Grisanti da Pola. Tanto cara. Su un lato della scuola, e sul lato opposto (Piazza Castello) c’era un viale di ippocastani e tigli: che profumo di tiglio a fine Maggio-Giugno, proprio quando c’era la festa con le giostre (di cavalla, bellissimi)! Il castello Visconteo ha una forma abbastanza elegante, tutto sommato: è piccolo, non bello come quello a Pavia (dove abitavano gli altri nonni). Insieme alla Chiesa Rossa (una cappella, tardo medioevo) e alla Cattedrale di San Bovo, era uno dei monumenti più antichi di Voghera. Peccato che lo usino come prigione! Penso di aver raccontato brevemente i punti più importanti del mio disegno. Potrei andare avanti, ma non credo che Lei e i suoi colleghi abbiano il tempo...Però, dovendo decidere cosa rappresentare, mi sono resa conto di quanto affetto provi ancora per quei posti...” (“[...] My Elementary School Dante Alighieri (who else?): I only spent a couple of years there before we moved to Asti, but I still remember it with pleasure. And I also remember my first teacher, Anita Grisanti from Pola. So nice. On one side of the school, and on the opposite side (Piazza Castello) there was an avenue of horse chestnuts and lime trees: that lime scent in late May to June, just when there was the party with the carousels (of mares, beautiful)! The Visconti castle has a rather elegant form, after all: it’s small, not as nice as the one in Pavia (where the other grandparents lived). Together with the Chiesa Rossa (a chapel, the late Middle Ages) and the Cathedral of St. Bovo, it was one of the oldest monuments of Voghera. Too bad that they use it as a prison! I think I have briefly told you the most important points of my design. I could go on, but I do not think that you and your colleagues have the time ... However, having to decide what to represent, I realized how much affection I still have for those places ...”).

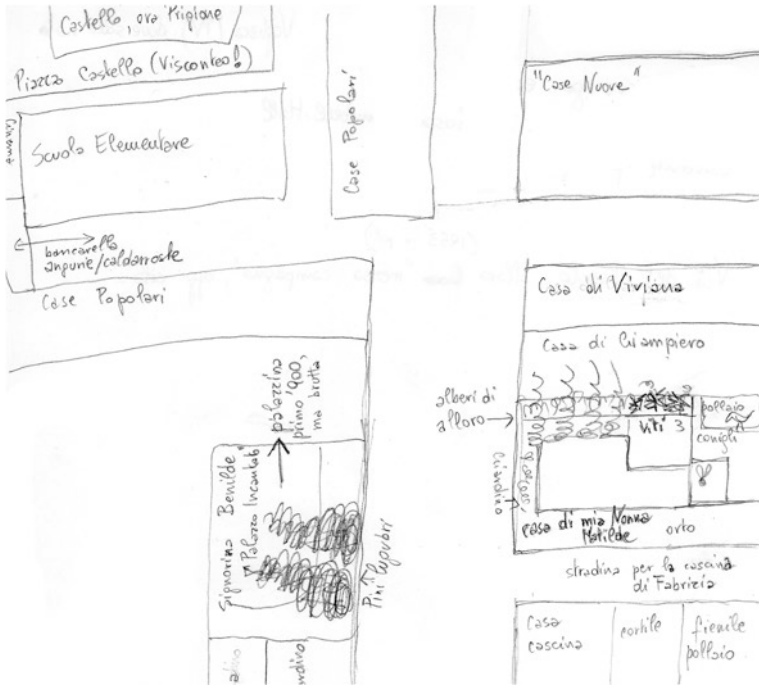


Fig. 54 Voghera



Fig. 55 Schematic representation



Fig. 56 Bardar

having made the drawing of the map of her village (Fig. 56), wanted to carry out a survey of her friends that remained in Bardar and fellow immigrants like her, making them draw maps of the same place and interviewing them on Facebook to find out their opinions and their intentions with respect to their common place of origin.

This additional work of the girl, which strictly speaking is not part of our corpus of analysis, seems nonetheless interesting to me to illustrate the meta-textual attitude of some maps: the migrant subject stands as an ethnographer that *compares* the images of her place of origin with others who share her experience of migration and with persons who are still rooted in that place. However, we should note that even these latter subjects, thanks to the internet, in turn live in a multi-perspective situation being able to stay in touch and exchange experiences, photographs, and texts of various kinds with people who went away but that maintain a series of cultural ties with the country. For example, they share the very important mother tongue by which they can still communicate. Unlike the Edenic world of the Italo-Syrian girl who refounded a binary cultural universe however, here we have an equally binary cultural universe but this time the images, feelings, and perspective on life in one or other of the two worlds are in flux. The two different environments are in a constant state of exchange, of confrontation, of transformation. The dialogue between people, between cultures, seems to be the basis for this model of co-membership, while in other cases we see more clearly the idea of a de-territorialising, nomadic, transfer,

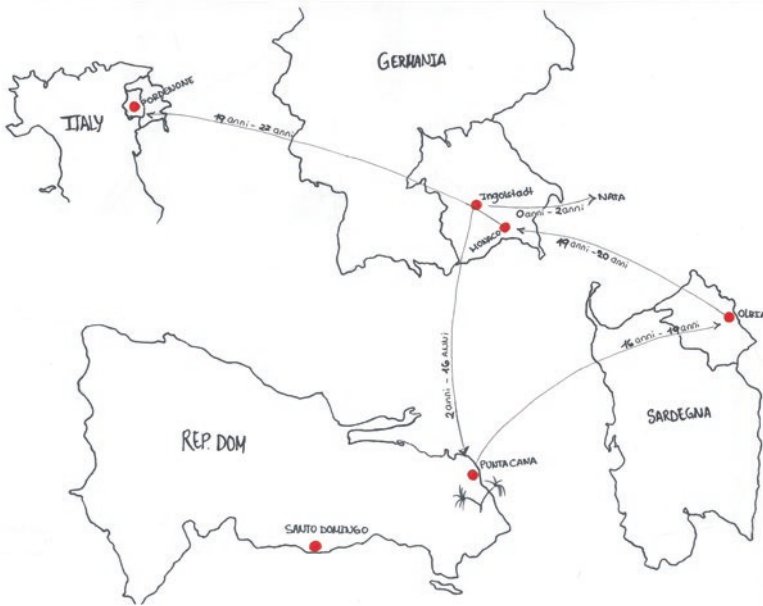


Fig. 57 Pure displacement

which hollows out the experiences of places leaving room for a smooth space (Deleuze and Guattari 1980), of pure displacement (Fig. 57).

What kind of meta discourse on relationships between cultures emerges from maps like this? It is very hard to say, certainly the world appears here as a kind of place of limitless opportunity, one that is barely internalised and barely personalised. It is difficult to talk about uprooting, this would be a superimposed, preconceived judgment of a representation that looks mostly neutral: neither rooted nor uprooted, the subject represents themselves as a pure movement vector between different places, without saying anything personal, except for the age the subject was at the time of the various transfers. You could even say that there emerges in the drawing a kind of a “euphoria of mobility”, an overcoming of the distances understood as barriers. Proportions are not respected, the borders are sometimes incomplete, the space between one country and the other is empty, *glossed over*, as a result of the moving and unearthly airplane. Santo Domingo, Olbia, Pordenone etc. are red dots, simple locations in a crossing space. What sense does a subject like this have for their place of origin? Rather, does there emerge the idea of a continual rebirth in every place, in every momentary “settling”, and so a territory, like that of birds, which is organised on the basis of the air and vector rather than on the basis of terrestrial and stable?

Perhaps we should expect an increase in this worldview from younger generations. The very idea of identity seems likely to undergo changes: the comparison between places, between cultures, if it becomes central and constant in the life of a

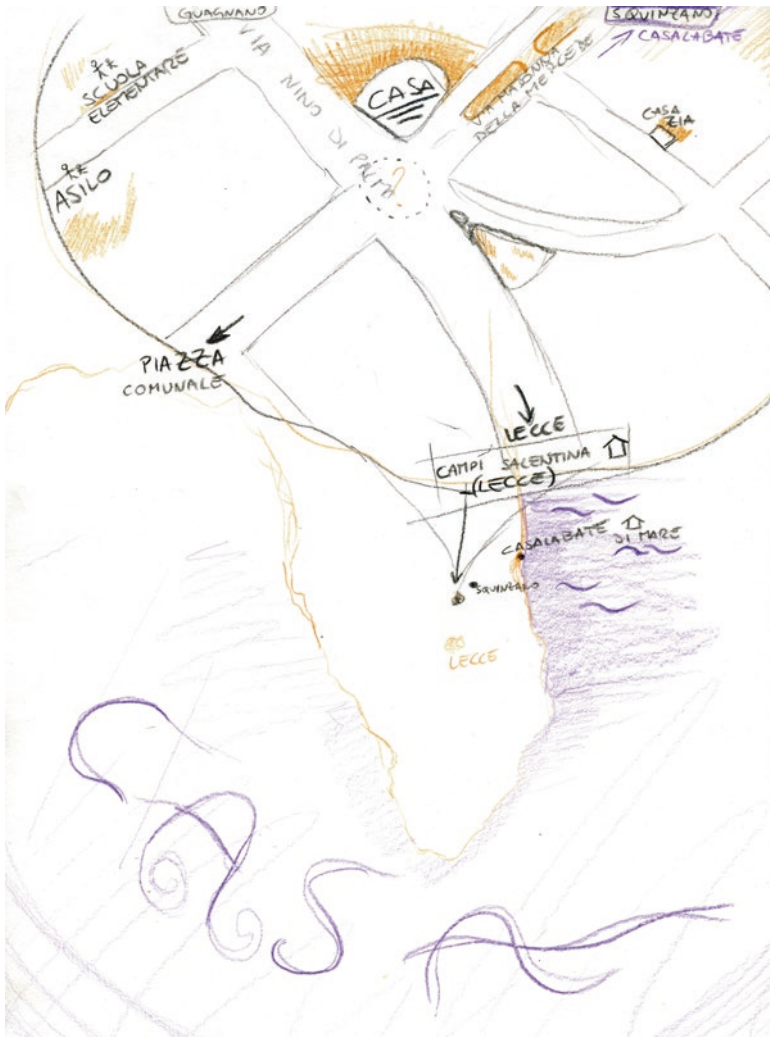
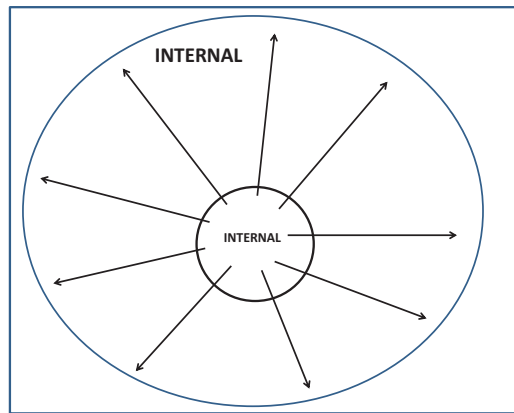


Fig. 58 Multi-perspectivity

person, both in actual movement or exchange through the internet, leads to a new subjectivity, a multi-perspectivity more than an identity in the traditional sense (Viveiros de Castro 2009). And also our way of studying these texts will have to change, we can no longer assume that the interviewee's view of himself and the world is the same as our own; that our categories are the right ones to read his feelings, his frame of reality, and its values. In a map collected in Oregon, a young man of Italian origin has thus designed his place of origin, Campi Salentina, by relating it to a wider universe (Fig. 58).

We can see that the word "casa" ("home") occurs twice: in the heart of the territory of origin, which is zoomed in, in the context of part of a region of Apulia; but

also in an undifferentiated surrounding territory without borders, where the writing itself fluctuates, forming curls and flourishes. This second occurrence of the word opens up the undifferentiated physical and cultural space for continued exploration. When I asked for a comment from this young man, he replied that he was willing to consider “home” as all over the world. In this way, he demonstrated the sharing of the concept of *Homeland Earth* proposed at the end of the millennium by Edgar Morin (1993). The young man, however, not only expressed the idea of a now common destiny for our small planet, but a more dynamic idea, of displacement and of exploration of new realities that can be absorbed and become part of one’s identity. The Lotmanian model that we considered above is blown apart, the internal and external (to the culture of each) no longer exists, and we are left with a radiation from an original ‘internal’ to an infinite plurality. We could draw this new model as follows:



In this way, the concept of origin is no longer to be understood as a *matrix* but rather as the *source*<sup>66</sup> awaiting new analytical instruments to be properly read and understood. In fact, this sentiment is already present in the lexical treasury of European languages, for example in the German word *Fernweh* indicating precisely this yearning for the journey<sup>67</sup> this nostalgia not for the homeland, for the home, but for the world to explore, for possible journeys. Also, in the aforementioned analysis by Greimas on nostalgia (Greimas 1988), the author claims that one of the possible declinations of this feeling is precisely directed toward what has never been known, or what is not yet known.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. for example the thinking of the anthropologist Tim Ingold, according to which organisms, including humans, must not be understood as discrete, predefined entities, but as places of growth and development within a field of relationships. It is a field that “unfolds” in the life of organisms and that they “enfold” in their morphologies, in their capacity for movement and consciousness (Ingold 2000).

<sup>67</sup>Sometimes the translation of some words is not so easy. For example English has *wanderlust*, but in the Italian translation “voglia di viaggiare” you lose the nostalgic element of *Fernweh* that comes with this German noun, and also, albeit conversely, with *Homesickness*.

## 7 Conclusions

At the end of this long series of case studies, we can say that, within the corpus, the basic attitudes that have emerged towards places of origin are quite different. First of all, although we insisted with the respondents that this place had to be the one of early childhood, most people preferred to represent a collective identity. The sense of community, of the *epos*, prevailed in these cases, leading sometimes to a chorus of testimonies, with maps and discourses collected by the interviewees, directly or via the web, from other people originating from their places of origin. For these people *collective feelings*<sup>68</sup> were stronger than individual ones, whether the places bore negative or problematic elements, or whether the subjects extolled their heroic or scenic perfection. And this is not trivial, nor was it predictable, both because early-childhood memories are usually related at most to family figures, and the young age of most of the respondents, which presaged a rather individualistic attitude. Furthermore, as pointed out by Clifford Geertz, the individual is always engaged in *symbolic mediations* that connect it to a collective cultural context, and therefore it is normal that, from childhood, a person constructs their identity on a background of beliefs, emotions, and shared rituals (Geertz 1973).

When, within this omnipresent dialectic between the individual and the collective, subjects mainly emphasised the individual aspect, we found in the maps and discourses of respondents a strong sense of attachment and inner continuity with respect to the place of origin. And this even when, in many cases, the person had been living away from home for study or for work. Also, this data to some extent contradicts now widely spread expectations, especially among young people, who are supposed to feel an attenuation of the link with traditions, of the sense of belonging to fixed places in favour of a more virtualised way to manage interpersonal and more globalised relationships towards environments (Bush 1999). On the contrary, many people, especially in Europe,<sup>69</sup> expressed a very close attachment to their places of origin, even when it came to small towns or remote places in the countryside. This should make us reflect on rushing to postulate a radical change in society and its values. It is also true that, as described in the last part of this work, the sample presented a substantial number of migrant people who had difficulty electing a single and precise place as their place of origin. These subjects, as we have seen, either try to reconcile their utopian co-belonging to two different places, or embrace an underlying relativism: you can love the homeland from which it was necessary to separate without a desire to return, and yet can also keep, for example

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<sup>68</sup> *Collective feelings (Passioni collettive)* is the title of the proceedings of a conference that the Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici organised on popular feeling and which showed the great importance, in the various fields of culture, politics and society, of these shared sentiments. Cf. Del Marco, Pezzini, edd., (2012).

<sup>69</sup> Since the US side of the sample represents only 20% of the total, we do not feel able to draw any conclusions about the difference between Europe and the United States. None of the people interviewed in Oregon, however, expressed a deep attachment to the place of origin, apart from the foreign-born adults who emigrated many years ago.



through *social networks*, continuing ties with the countries in which you no longer live. It is a new form of co-belonging thanks to which the boundary between the interior and the exterior of a culture are no longer so clear, as in the hypothesised models of Lotman, but extremely porous, to the point that feelings traditionally linked to migration, such as nostalgia, seem to give way to a feeling of multiplicity, of multi-perspectivism and, ultimately, of enrichment that comes from sharing several cultural spheres. At this point, however, the categories of “origin” and “identity” should be reformulated, rethought, in a probably more dynamic fashion, both by introducing culturally different views (ultimately almost all of our respondents belong to the so-called “western culture”), and hypothesising a new subject, which views its origin not so much as a template, the matrix of its identity, but as a source, the primitive condition of a process of development and of transformation that will take it to diverse places, in contact with different cultures. A human being of this type acquires a status of continuous contamination where identity is more transient in relation to the Other, compared to those who lived in the most settled societies of the past.

Ultimately, what this specific corpus of analysis suggests, as we wait for other studies with different people interviewed, is that there coexists today two diametrically opposed models: a large one, of a persistent attachment to places of origin; and another one aimed at overcoming the concept of a place of belonging and stable identity. It is difficult to predict how long these two models will be able to continue to coexist without provoking an explosive dynamic, as theorized by Lotman, by entering into contact with one another. It is even more difficult to predict, in the case of a blossoming of a radically new form of culture, which of the current models would assert themselves over the other.

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