L’UNIVERSITÀ PLURALE TRA ESPERIENZA E RICERCA: DESIGN A SAN MARINO

A PLURAL UNIVERSITY BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH: DESIGN IN SAN MARINO

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ABSTRACT
Secondo Gropius «Il nostro secolo ha prodotto il tipo dell’artista in un’infinità di esempi: facciamo ora in modo che nascano uomini dall’ampia visione» (1935). Walter Gropius esprime già nel 1937 uno dei capostrappe da cui originano i Corsi di laurea in Design dell’Università di San Marino. Contro gli specialismi, evitando la continua rincorsa dell’accelerazione indotta dall’innovazione tecnologica e dall’aggiornamento degli strumenti, il Design a San Marino mette al centro del piano formativo la persona e le sue relazioni. Il paper argomenta con esempi ed esperienze le ragioni, i metodi e le scelte effettuate dal gruppo di docenti che hanno progettato e coordinano il percorso didattico.

According Gropius «Our century has produced the expert type in millions; let us make way now for the men of vision» (1955). In 1937, Walter Gropius expressed one of the tenets underlying the Design programmes at the University of San Marino. Against all specialism and avoiding the constant pursuit of an acceleration driven by technological innovation and constantly updated tools, Design in San Marino places the person and his relationships at the centre of its educational curriculum.

The paper relies on examples and experiences to argue the reasons, methods and choices made by the group of teachers who designed and coordinate the course.

KEYWORDS
formazione universitaria; design; multidisciplinarietà; ricerca; università come comunità.

university education; design; multi-disciplinarity; research; university as community.

Riflettere sulla formazione di un designer, attività in equilibrio tra sapere e ‘saper fare’, significa trattare di temi, metodi e processi senza poter astrarre gli obiettivi di una scuola dal contesto. Se, ad esempio, il piano formativo del Bauhaus, mirando a congiungere il gesto creativo dell’artista con la pro- duzione industriale, lavorava sul trasferimento delle qualità artistiche e artigianali sui prodotti di fabbricazione industriale, se la scuola di ULM concepiva progetti di prodotti la cui estetica se- riale si misurava sulle necessità dell’emergente società di massa proponendo l’oggetto per tutti, il piano formativo progettato oggi da un’Univer- sità di progetto non può esimersi dal confronto con il contesto socio-economico attuale, carattera- zizzato da una molteplicità di stimoli visivi, dallo svanirsi delle qualità prodottive, dall’uso di nuove tecnologie e dei devices digital.

Il progetto, da sempre interprete della condi- zione contemporanea, ponendosi l’obiettivo di soddisfare le esigenze di un’utente sempre più eterogenea e allargata, oggi indaga i contesti più differenzi, In questo forte si possono leggere le motivazioni delle tante attivazioni di corsi e master in design che, cercando di dare risposta alla frammentazione del mercato contemporaneo, lavorano anche su piccole nicchie di mercato. Ma il compito di una Università del design è davvero dare risposta alle nuove fasi della cultura indus- triale e alle esigenze del mercato del lavoro? Sostiene il docente e designer Kuno Prey intervi- stato da Hans Höger (2006, p. 60): «il mio punto di vista la ricerca nel campo del design deve muo- versi in due direzioni: se da una parte deve mante- nere stretti contatti con la realtà, dall’altra ha anche il compito di metterla in discussione e immaginare nuove basi su cui formulare scenari futuri. Ritengo che sia proprio il mondo accademico ad offrire le condizioni ideali e di conseguenza un grande potenziale di successo per questo tipo di lavoro».


Corsi di formazione professionali, con eviden- te e dichiarata vocazione al fare, specializzano tec- nici del settore. La società cambia e mutano le problematiche, alcune di cui sono antiche, altre nuove. Le università, invece, sono baluardi dell’esperienza d’oggi e dell’avanguardia. Per questo motivo è fondamentale che la formazione universitaria si distingua dall’insegnamento professionale, mettendo al centro dell’attenzione non solo i contenuti e le tecniche, ma anche il pensiero e le riflessioni sul percorso di formazione. Per questo motivo la formazione universitaria non può essere confinata all’ambito della produzione tecnologica, ma deve essere un luogo di riflessione e di invenzione.

Sono però in molti e – non certo reazionari – a sostenere invece che un’Università che si occu- pa di formare persone nell’ambito del progetto debba essere un luogo in cui lo studente possa sviluppare un’attitudine con la quale relazionarsi con il progetto, tra sapere e ‘saper fare’, nella consapevolezza della condizione economica, sociale e culturale contemporanea. Contro gli specialismi, evitando la continua rincorsa dell’accelerazione indotta dall’innovazione tecnolo- gica, dall’aggiornamento degli strumenti e dalla sempre più celare obsolescenza dei prodotti e dei servizi, il Design a San Marino (Figg. 1, 2) mette al centro del piano formativo, la persona e le sue relazioni, come comunità.

The paper relies on examples and experiences to argue the reasons, methods and choices made by the group of teachers who designed and coordinate the course.

Fig. 1 - The architectural context of the Ancient Monastery of Santa Chiara, the headquarters of the undergraduate and graduate programmes in Design.
scena – Posta l’educazione della persona come obiettivo di un progetto di formazione universitaria, la pluralità di pensiero, parte della stessa definizione del termine Università, si pone alla base dell’offerta formativa in cui lo stretto e insolubile legame fra l’acquisizione di competenze progettuali e la riflessione teorica, storica e critica si articola negli ambiti del ‘produzione’, del ‘visuale’ e del ‘multimedia design’. È la multidisciplinarietà e l’interdisciplinarietà del percorso del Corso di laurea triennale (Figg. 3, 4), inizialmente dettate dalla corrispondenza con il piano IUAV di Venezia, ritenute strategiche e lungimiranti, indirizzano anche la scelta degli ambiti dei percorsi magistrali: Interaction and Motion Graphics Design1. Il piano di studi, triennale quanto magistrale, affianca ai laboratori di design, specifici per questo tipo di percorsi, una pluralità di insegnamenti teorici e strumentali. È indispensabile infatti fornire alla studente categorie interpretative relazionate con il fare progettuale con cui leggere il contesto della complessità contemporanea favorendo, peraltro, lo sviluppo delle sue capacità di ricerca e di approfondimento critico. Posto soprattutto all’inesito del triennio gli insegnamenti strumentali di fotografia, disegno, geometria, modellistica e rappresentazione digitale forniscono allo studente le basi di osservazione, analysi e rappresentazione che una volta padroneggiato lo rendano libero di esprimersi nel progetto. Orientano e contestualizzano invece le prime esperienze di laboratorio storia del design, delle comunicazioni visive, dell’arte e dell’architettura oltre agli insegnamenti di semiotica e di critica del contemporaneo che ne completano il percorso. Più orientato ai processi di innovazione e all’esplorazione del rapporto tra l’uomo e le nuove tecnologie, il contributo teorico offerto dai corsi dell’anno accademico, ma piuttosto renderlo capace di essere posto sul mercato a conclusione del termine Università può essere letto da un lato come sfruttamento e appropriazione indebita dell’attività didattica, dall’altro come tentativo di surrogare competenze scientifiche specifiche con l’intuizione di chi si sta ancora formando nel progetto. Se poi considereremmo il punto di vista dello studente, lavorare per clienti reali di specifico contributo nei confronti di una tematica generale proposta, pen-sando, approfondendo e delineando i propri obiettivi perseguiti sperimentando, fallendo e ricominciando fino a arrivare a definire una propria identità. L’attenzione si rivolge quindi al processo, ritenuto più importante di qualsiasi risultato. Non si tratta di formare studenti che abbiano un alfabeto comune e renderli riconoscibili come appartenenti ad una scuola, quanto di lavorare sulla valorizzazione delle persone, con interessi, obiettivi e aspettative diverse, rendendoli progettisti consa-

Fig. 2 - Video-mapping Terra libera, terra aperta. Guerra e accoglimento sul Titano (directed by R. Cafarelli and R. Varini, produced by A. Gemmaretti, A. Rastighi with the second-year students, 2015).

Fig. 3, 4 - Left: Results of the workshop Cork as a Material. Innovation arising from experimentation on material (F. Alarcao, J. di Bonaventura, partner Amorim Cork Composites, 2017). Right: Video-mapping for the Video and Multimedia Design Studio taught by R. Cafarelli with E. La Maida (S. Donatini, M. Mutton and A. Pellegrini, 2018).

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pevoli del cosa, dove, quando, come, perché e per chi progettano. Una mentalità che consente loro da studenti, ma ancora di più da professionisti, di analizzare e comprendere nel profondo il contesto fino ad individuare nuovi temi e problemi a cui cercare di proporre possibili soluzioni.

La flessibilità e l’accelerazione imposte al mondo contemporaneo da innovazione scientifica e tecnologica portano poi ad una sempre più rapida quiescenza di strumenti, prodotti, servizi che la scuola non può contrastare se non formando persone attente e sensibili capaci di orientarsi e ri-orientarsi con entusiasmo e serietà nelle nuove sfide. ‘While one may perceive the profession as a victim of these transformations, design has an active role to play in addressing social and global change’ (Bonsiepe, 2011).

L’esperienza dei laboratori di progetto – Gli esempi sotto riportati, rappresentano solo una selezione di uno’offerta di laboratori più ampia e articolata negli ambiti del product, del visual, del service e dell’interaction design, ma possono aiutare ad esplicitare il racconto teorico/pedagogico finora espresso. La scelta degli esempi, per chiarezza di racconto, è omogenea e ricade su laboratori di design del prodotto e di interazione più affini agli Autori per formazione ed esperienza didattica. Si tratta di laboratori coordinati da professionisti, designer spesso noti a livello internazionale ed esterni al mondo accademico, che trovano nell’insegnamento l’opportunità di ragionare e confrontarsi sul fare progettuale a partire da un tema che ogni anno diviene espedito per una nuova ricerca.

‘Il vero limite nell’innovazione di un materia le non risiede nel materiale stesso, ma nell’approccio che si ha nei suoi confronti. Tutto può rimbalzare, essere allungato o compreso, piegato o rimanere in linea, essere ruvido, liscio, leggero o pesante. Anche il vetro’. Così sono presentati in occasione di Matrioska, mostra laboratorio sulla creatività di Rimini, i risultati del laboratorio di design del prodotto del primo anno tenuto da designere Massimo Barbierato con Gaetano Giuliano. Agli studenti non è stato chiesto di ragionare su alcuna produzione urbana’, consentono un proficuo scambio. Che sia dialettico o su empatia; che coinvolga l’ambito emotivo o personale, condizionate sempre di più dal flusso di dati digitali che stratificandosi diventano sempre di più inaccessibili.

I corsi di design del prodotto-servizio del designer Lorenzo Palmieri e di sound design del designer Stefano Luca approfondiscono con diversi approcci il rapporto tra suono, artefatto e interazione. L’obiettivo degli insegnamenti è fornire agli studenti gli strumenti concettuali e operativi essenziali per la creazione di oggetti sonori originali. Interessante è il progetto ‘Il suono delle cose’ dove gli studenti, guidati da Palmieri, hanno lavorato alla definizione di un nuovo strumento musicale. Il progetto si basa su una profonda ricerca sui ter ritori di origine dei singoli studenti e cerca di cogliere e riuscire a restituire i sapori, le tipicità, le vibrazioni, i comportamenti al di là dei luoghi conosciuti (Figg. 16-18).

In maniera simile il corso di Luca affronta il tema del suono, ma con un approccio progettuale legato ai media e agli artefatti declinando le nozioni di suono digitale e dell’elettroacustica sul progetto del sound landscape e sound branding di artefatti comuni come ad esempio lavatrici a getto ni o macchine del caffè. I laboratori di progetto rappresentano le opportunità di maggiori confronti tra docenti e studenti, ma il rapporto è, e rimane, fondamentale qualsiasi sia la disciplina insegnata: è un continuo processo di approfondimento e sollecitazioni reciproche che, complice il rapporto numerico docente/studenti contenuto, consente un proficuo scambio. Che sia dialettico o dialogico, basato su rispecchiamento e simpatia o su empatia; che coinvolga l’ambito emotivo o

Figg. 5-7 - From the top: Product Design Studio 1 taught by M. Barbierato with G. Giuliano, the experience in the Nason Moretti furnace in Murano (2017); Prototype of the project for the Product Design Studio (E. Finesso, L. Gaudenzzi and G. Moretti, 2017); Mold and prototype of the project for the Product Design Studio 1 (G. Papetti, A. Silvestri and A. Urbainat, 2017).
Conclusioni – Il design, da sempre interpretato della condizione contemporanea, riflette l’attuale condizione socio-economico ambientale in continua e sempre più veloce trasformazione. Il processo lineare del progetto proposto dal sistema classico industriale di ideazione, verifica, produzione, distribuzione, comunicazione e consumo è superato. Ciascuna fase del tradizionale processo è stata in parte o totalmente sovvertita dall’introduzione delle nuove tecnologie digitali. La rete e l’esperienza digitale hanno modificato la tranquilla e strategica posizione autoreliativa del designer e la rigidità del sistema procedurale industriale introdúcendo con la democratizzazione del sapere la possibilità di confronto su contenuti, esperienze, metodologie e risultati. In rete, se si focalizza l’attenzione sul design di prodotto ad esempio, è facile trovare programmi open per la modellazione, opportunità per il finanziamento come il crowdfunding, canali di comunicazione in tempo e sistemi di distribuzione tramite e-commerce che conducono verso nuovi e diversi strumenti di produzione e autoprogettazione digitale che – almeno nello scenario descritto da Donald A. Norman – spingeranno sempre di più verso l’auto-didattica (2016).

A fronte di un quadro di disgregazione e frammentazione disciplinare, all’interno del quale l’università rischia di emergere come istituzione tra l’altro a renderci ricchi, sia ‘l’altro’ studente, appartenza alla sfera razionale, è il confronto con l’altro a rendere ricchi, sia ‘l’altro’ studente, docente o collega (Sennet, 2012).

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To rethink the education of a designer, a profession balanced between knowing and knowing how, means addressing the themes, methods and processes without abstracting the objectives of a learning institution from the context. Just as, for example, the curriculum of the Bauhaus, in its search to merge the creative gesture of the artist with industrial production, worked on transferring artistic and handcrafted qualities to industrially-manufactured products; and the School of Ulm conceived projects for products with a standardized aesthetic that responded to the needs of a newly-emerging mass society to make objects suited for everyone, the curriculum offered by today’s design Universities must necessarily deal with the current social and economic context, characterized by the multiplicity of visual stimuli, the overabundance of products, the use of new technologies and digital devices.

Design, which has always interpreted the contemporary condition, setting and pursuing the goal of satisfying the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous and extended user ship, is involved today in the exploration of a wide range of contexts. This may well be one explanation for the activation of so many courses and master programmes in design, in which the attempt to respond to the fragmentation of today’s market, have identified even the smallest of market niches. But is the mission of a design university really to provide a response to the new phases of the industrial culture and the needs of the job market? In an interview with Hans Høger, teacher and designer Kuno Prey sustained (2006, p. 60): “from my point of view research into the field of design must move in two directions: on the one hand, it needs to keep closely in touch with reality, but on the other it must necessarily question it and imagine new bases on which to formulate future scenarios. I believe that the academic world offers the ideal conditions and consequently great potential for success in an effort of this kind.

The twin identity of education of design: academic and technical – Uncritical acceptance or even generic indifference towards the contemporary can lead to the education of highly specialized designers. But why give priority to the profession and not to the person? Walter Gropius provided an answer to this question as early as 1935 when, in describing the Bauhaus experience in The New Architecture and the Bauhaus, and later again in The Scope of Total Architecture, he explained how priority was given to the human being over the need to specialize the student in a trade, to developing and ripening the intelligence, feelings and ideas of the students (1935, p. 31), thereby identifying one of the elements that makes the difference between a university education and a technical education, still today.

Training programmes that adopt a pragmatic approach to new professions, with a clear and stated hands-on vocation, specialize technical personnel in their fields. Society is changing and so are the issues that are central to working, but does a university that intends to educate designers really demonstrate vitality by differentiating and constantly rethinking its curricula? Or could the recurring variations be considered an attempt to keep up with the latest trends with the risk of exposing design to the transient nature of fashion and styling? Or could it be that offering a wide range of modified and modifiable programmes is just a means to attract private funds to offset the slashing of federal funding to the public university system? Whatever the answer to these questions, in the light of the important theoretical and cultural education that has always distinguished Italian universities, the national Institutions themselves have sought to reduce the gap between the reality of the profession and the university, choosing to promote curricula that would allow the recent graduate to spend his skills as early as possible on the job market.

But many are those – and they are not necessarily reactionary – who sustain on the contrary that a university dedicated to training young people in the field of design must be a place in which the student can develop an attitude that cultivates his approach to design and includes both knowledge and know-how, as well as an awareness of the contemporary economic, social and cultural condition. Against all specialism, and avoiding the
constant pursuit of an acceleration driven by technological innovation, constantly updated tools, and the increasingly rapid obsolescence of products and services. Design in San Marino (Figs. 1, 2) places the person and his relationships at the centre of its educational curriculum (Bassi and Bulegato, 2014; Bosco and Zannoni, 2014; Sinni, 2016; Verganti, 2017). The university must be a place of exchange in which various fields of knowledge, approaches and points of view may converge, raising questions in the mind of the student, rather than serving up preconceived answers.

Interdisciplinarity: towards an economy of knowledge – With this focus on the education of the person as the goal of the project for a university curriculum, plurality of thought, which is inherent to the definition of the word University itself, becomes the foundation for an educational approach in which the tight and indivisible bond between the acquisition of design skills and theoretical, historical and critical thinking, is developed in the fields of product, visual and multimedia design. The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of the Undergraduate curriculum (Figs. 3, 4), initially dictated by the correspondence with the curriculum of the IUAV University of Venice, is considered both strategic and far-sighted, and orients the choice of fields for the Graduate programmes: Interaction and Motion Graphics Design². Both the undergraduate and graduate curricula support the Design Studios, specific to this type of programme, with a plurality of courses in design theory and the use of design tools. It is essential to provide the student with interpretative categories related to the design process that he can use to read the context of contemporary complexity, thereby helping to develop his capacity for research and critical investigation. The first year of the undergraduate programme features instructional courses in photography, drawing, geometry, model-making and digital representation which provide the student with a basis for observation, analysis and representation that, when fully mastered, give him the necessary freedom to express himself in his design work. Orientation and context for his first experiences in the Design Studio are provided by courses in the history of design, visual communication, art and architecture, in addition to the courses in semiotics and criticism of the contemporary that complete the curriculum.

More specifically oriented towards the processes of innovation and the exploration of the relationship between man and new technology, the theoretical component of the graduate curriculum features not only design criticism, human factors, the history of motion graphics, the semiotics of artefacts and the history and practices of communication in contemporary design, but also more specific teachings such as the theory and techniques of interaction, the technology and processes of interaction. They are supported by operative disciplines and technical workshops that allow the students to develop the theoretical skills of interaction design using programming languages and open-sources platforms for electronic and digital prototyping to conceive and control the narration of complex projects. Notions from the social, economic, scientific and technical disciplines, from geometry to physics, are pulled from their niche of
self-referential specialization to be applied to design methodologies. The student explores the structure of materials and physical principles to understand their logic and possible applications, extending his scope beyond established disciplinary points of view.

The curricula in San Marino are founded on the value of interdisciplinarity, well interpreted and supported by point four of the 2011 Icoograda Design Education Manifesto: «Integrate theory, history, criticism, research, and management to increase the production of design knowledge in order to enhance innovation and efficacy in respect of environmental and human factors» (p. 10). Tomás Maldonado extends the value of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity beyond the aspects of function and application, defining a possible response to the constant and necessary thirst for knowledge that drives every human being: «interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity not only respond to an increasingly compelling need for the cooperation among disciplines, they are also the expression (as they have always been) of an unwavering vocation to knowledge» (2010).

From the idea to the thing, the responsibility of Design Studios – The design of artefacts – understood as an integrated process embracing theory and practice, research, methodology and the use of tools – describes both the design process that takes place in a university Design Studio, and the development of a project by a professional firm. The real similarity in the development process has led to a close and ambivalent dialogue between the university and the manufacturing world, which often results in the adoption of the teaching by project method (Hüger, 2006), a practice in which students work on developing a possible response to a real issue brought to them by a manufacturing company. If the collaboration with universities risks being perceived by manufacturing companies as a substitute for investing in research by their own or independent Research and Development divisions, from the University’s point of view, this could be viewed on the one hand as inappropriate exploitation, perhaps even a sort of encroachment on didactic activities, on the other as an attempt by the company to replace specific scientific competencies with the intuitions, no matter how brilliant, of students who are still learning the design process. From the student’s point of view, working for real clients on real briefs often means, at first glance, participating in exciting new challenges, only to realize that it also means wasting an opportunity to develop his own independent thinking.

The goal of Design Studios is therefore not to have the student develop a product that is ready for the market by the end of the school year, but to give him the capacity to explore and bring his own specific contribution to a generic theme, encouraging him to think, to do his research, to identify his own objectives and by experimenting, trying, failing and starting again, to succeed in defining his own autonomous identity, but not alone. Hence attention is focused on the process, which is considered more important than the actual results. The point is not to train students to develop a common alphabet that can make them recognizable as products of the same school, but to cultivate them as individuals, with individual interests, goals and expectations, and to turn them into designers who are conscious of what, where, when, how, why and for whom they are designing. This mentality will allow them, as students but even more so as professionals, to look around and develop an acute understanding of the context that surrounds them, to identify new themes and problems for which they might propose original solutions.

The flexibility and acceleration imposed on the contemporary world by scientific and technological innovation are leading to an increasingly rapid obsolescence of tools, products and services, which the university can thwart only by training observant, sensitive individuals, who can orient and re-orient themselves with enthusiasm and commitment in their approach to new challenges. «While one may perceive the profession as a victim of these transformations, design has an active role to play in addressing social and global changes» (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 31).

In the Design Studios – The examples described below represent just a small segment of a wider and differentiated selection of Design Studios in the fields of product, visual, service and interaction design, but they can help to illustrate the theoretical/pedagogical intent expressed up to this point. The choice of examples, for clarity of presentation, is homogenous and focuses on product and interaction Design Studios which the Authors are more familiar with by training and teaching experience. These Design Studios are coordinated by professionals who are often distinguished in their field, and do not belong to the academic world; but first and foremost they are individuals with different approaches to design, who view teaching as an opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas on design based on a theme that becomes the pretext every year for new research and experimentation.

«The real limit to innovation in a material does not lie in the material itself, but in the approach you have towards it. Everything can bounce, be stretched or compressed, folded or stay straight, be rough, smooth, light or heavy. Even glass». The results of the first-year product Design Studio taught by designer Massimo Barbierato with Gaetano Giuliano were presented in these words at Matritska, an exhibition and market on creativity in Rimini. Students were not asked to explore a functional typology, but to think, like alchemists of design, about possible changes in the consolidated glass-blowing process. The prototypes were made with great dedication and professional skill by the master glassmakers at Nason & Moretti (Figs. 5-7).

Strongly experimental and interdisciplinary, the theme proposed in the first-year Design Studio by Professor Massimo Brignoni with Federico Paternò explores how Design can contribute to a complex event such as the mise-en-scène of a play. The design of the masks for Aristophanes’ Birds for the Classical Theatre Workshop of the Liceo G. Perticari high school in Senigallia, takes the student through a process of research, abstraction and synthesis leading him to develop a three-
The research developed by Professor Riccardo Varini with Francesco Codici, Alessio Abdolahian and the second-year students of the Universities of San Marino and Bologna focused on strategic and systemic design for social purposes. The specific themes for the course, acupuncture and urban regeneration, called for a particularly sensitive approach to the analysis of contexts such as cities, towns and urban parks, conceived as complex structures that endure constant transformations and profound mutations on the level of personal relationships and the environment. The students, asked to reflect on the cultural and social value of the designer’s work, developed the designs of envelopes or collective systems for relationships such as urban living units, integrated collections of urban furniture or structures for public spaces. Developed in collaboration with the Neri manufacturing company from Longiano, six prototypes of the projects were exhibited during the annual meeting of the American Society of Landscape Architects in Los Angeles (Figg. 10, 11).

Architect and designer Marcello Ziliani teaches a third-year product Design Studio with Silvia Gasparotto, in which the students begin to develop the project after an extensive phase of research into concepts that are considered to be design requisites, such as sustainability and the analysis of a product’s life cycle, and into methodologies such as design thinking, behavioural design and the lateral thinking of Edward de Bono, which teach the students to reflect on solutions that respond to the real needs of people, correctly identifying the problems involved and asking the right questions in order to take often-unconventional approaches to the problems. Developed in collaboration with Caritas in Rimini the theme, Sheltered from the Storm: Design for Migration, is a project to improve the living conditions of refugees along the entire migration route (Figg. 12, 13).

The Graduate programme proposes particularly interesting teaching experiences on the theme of interaction, service and sound design. The courses in Design of interactive information systems taught by designer Daniele Tabellini and in Interaction Theories taught by Professor Michele Zannoni address the theme of designing interactive artefacts helping students to develop a critical attitude towards technology, exploring new digital instruments that better respond to man and his real needs. More specifically the Design Studio taught by Tabellini and titled Making visible: expressive computational approaches to meaning, works on giving visibility and tangibility to the invisible mass of digital information that involves the personal sphere of the individual, the community and the geographical and ideal territories in which we live (Figg. 14, 15). Adopting a very similar approach, Zannoni’s course over the past two years has explored the relationship between personal and collective memory, and digital instruments. The students designed interactive artefacts that allow people to rediscover the relationship between memory and personal identity, increasingly influenced by the continuous flow of digital data that stratify to become increasingly inaccessible.

The courses in product-service design by designer Lorenzo Palmeri and in sound design by designer Stefano Luca address the relationship between sound, artefact and interface using different approaches. The goal of these courses is to give students the essential conceptual and operative tools to create original sound objects. A project of particular interest is The Sound of Things, in which the students, directed by Palmeri, worked on developing a new musical instrument. The project was based on extensive research into the native regions of each individual student and sought to capture and in some form to convey their flavours, typical products, vibrations and behaviours, eschewing stereotypes (Figg. 16-18).

Similarly, Luca’s course addressed the theme of sound, but with a design approach based on media and artefacts, applying the notions of digital and electroacoustic sound to the design of soundscapes and the sound branding of common artefacts such as, for example, washing machines in laundromats or coffee makers. The Design Studios represent the best opportunities for dialogue between teachers and students, but the relationship is, and remains fundamental no matter what the discipline being taught: it is a continuous process of exploration and sharing insights that, thanks to the excellent teacher/student ratio, leads to a fruitful exchange. Whether dialectic or dialectic, based on imitation or sympathy or on empathy; whether it involves the emotional or rational sphere, it is the exchange with the other that enriches us, whether the other is a student, a teacher or a colleague (Sennet, 2012).

Conclusions – Design, which has always interpreted the contemporary condition, reflects the current environmental, social and economic condition which is in constant and accelerating transformation. The linear design process inherent in the classic industrial system of ideation, verification, production, distribution, communication and consumption has been superseded. Each phase of the traditional process has been partially or totally subverted by the introduction of new digital technologies. Internet and the digital experience have modified the established strategic position of the designer as author as well as the rigid industrial procedural system by introducing, thanks to

the democratization of knowledge, the possibility of exchanging contents, experiences, methodologies and results. Online, if the focus is product design for example, it’s easy to find open modelling programmes, funding opportunities such as crowdfunding, free communication channels and systems of distribution via e-commerce that lead towards new and different digital production tools and that, in the scenario described by Donald A. Norman, will lead increasingly towards self-teaching (2016).

At a time when the discipline seems to be increasingly fragmented, and universities risk appearing as a traditional, outdated and perhaps unnecessary institution, the only response may well be to promote educational paths that do not set the training of design professionals as their goal, but the education of observant and sensitive persons, who can orient and re-orient themselves with enthusiasm and commitment in their approach to new challenges, young designers who can analyse, explore and manage complex contexts of contemporary design, and anticipate and interpret the new needs of a community in constant transformation, respecting man and the environment with particular attention to ethics and social responsibility. And the choice of what to design and present, how and especially why, will depend more than in the past on the attitude learned by the designer, and thus responsibility will increasingly lie with the education he received from the university. Critical thinking is the element that will truly make the difference.

NOTES

1) The Design programmes of the University of Republic of San Marino, classified L-04 and LM-12 by the Ministry of Instruction, were founded respectively in the Academic Year 2005/06 and 2012/13 with the IUAV University of Venice. Since 2017/18 they are held in collaboration with University of Bologna.

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