Representations of the City.
The Diffuse Museum *The Esquilino Tales*

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Abstract

Various experiments in cultural heritage enhancement and education have been directed at defining new paradigms of experience, bringing actions and interactions of and between subjects back to the centre. This has led to renewed interest in experiences capable of integrating education and fun, because the emotional environment of playing and the method of "learn by doing" facilitates learning processes.

In this context, we present The Esquilino Tales, conducted in the Master in Communication of Cultural Goods at the Sapienza University of Rome, which aims to enhance the varied, even identity-building complexity of the Esquilino area, the XV Rione of Rome. Since this is a place where both the whole and its individual parts are recognizable first as "figures", the project began with the conviction that an effective proposal could only start with the specific signs of the places. The experimentation therefore investigated the practices of representation, innovating with them through the techniques of storytelling, gamification, and storydoing to develop a communication strategy using a wide range of graphical/visual languages. In this strategy, active means of exploration such as initial actions of enhancement and urban regeneration are proposed for activation between the visitors/citizens and Esquilino/city to begin to rescue our city.

Keywords: graphical languages, communication, enhancement, gamification, storytelling.

Italian Cultural Heritage and the diffuse museum

What makes the Italian cultural heritage truly unique is that «continuum between monuments, cities, and citizens» because, according to an interpretation by Salvatore Settis, it is precisely in that extraordinary continuum between monuments and the cities' connective fabric housing them that «our most precious cultural good» is found [Settis 2002, p. 10].

This is such an authentic awareness about Italy that, since the definition cultural goods was set out, the heritage –material and intangible– has been considered a systemic good, that is, an expression of the set of qualitative and quantitative connections among individual goods and between these and the context of reference. This idea of systemic heritage also gave rise to a culture of enhancement «in which the value of

each individual monument or object of art results not from its isolation, but from its insertion within a vital context» [Settis 2002, p. 15].

In recent years in particular, this active awareness of profound renewal has regarded the mission of museums [MiBACT 2014] and the role that they can play in promoting education and scientific progress, cultural and natural diversity, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue [UNESCO 2015]. This renewal has regarded both "objects" in the collection [Desvallées, Mairesse 2010, p. 26] and museum spaces, expanding the former and dilating the latter for new understand about the practices and knowledge, cultural places connected to them, and the communities that are recognized in that cultural heritage [UNESCO 2003].
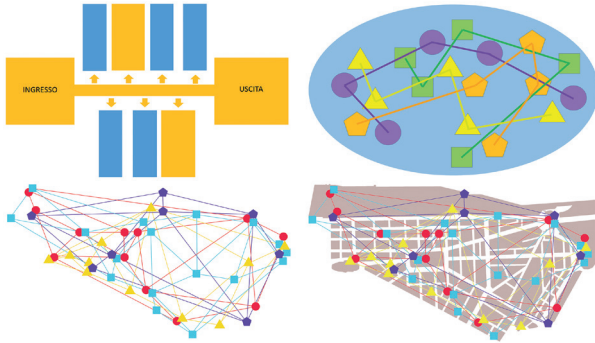
The view of the museum therefore projects outside, re-evaluating the cultural heritage in cities and the communities that live there, particularly through the "diffuse museum", a particular type of museum that embraces various concepts of the ideal museum, reaching the concept of Italy as a large outdoor museum to realize the «dream of recomposing knowledge: historical, artistic, architectural, scientific, material» [Mottola Molfino 2007]. In this particular type of diffuse museum, it is even more imperative to work on the system and the connections to design «paths of meaning that are well focused on specific territorial areas such that […] it does not simply summarize a series of works of art or monuments, but is translated into a historically and culturally consistent path, or many parallel paths» [Bray 2013].

The strategy

The reflections made thus far frame the communication project *The Esquilino Tales* [1], which, while referring to a particular case study, is proposed as a customizable model which can therefore be replicated in other parts of Italian cities due to the recurrence of the same types of objects. More in general, in its organization and general lines, the experience is proposed as a possible version of a diffuse museum in the city with the specific objective of becoming an active practice in the culture of the city in question, reflecting the attitudes of a particular public –teenagers between 13 and 18– who are naturally excited by curiosity and socializing and are ready to play.

At this 'museum', play, creativity, and participation for emotional involvement, interaction, and also the repetitive schemes underlying each game allow the cultural knowledge to become more easily impressed, bringing teenagers/citizens to the inestimable heritage of the city, even «on the face of the image and the enhancement of the country» [Settis 2002, p. 10].

For the effectiveness of the educational experience, the theoretical support used to set up the communication project refers to Harold Dwight Lasswell's "model of communication", which, while subject to criticism, adaptation, and integration, has remained the basis of comparison for later theories of communication.

In 1948, Lasswell, a political scientist, sociologist, theorist of political science, and pioneer in mass media studies, defined in a concise, cogent sentence the principal ques-

tions implied by each act of communication, synthetically formulating the principles of his model. A «convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following question: Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?» [Lasswell 1948, p. 37].

It is clear that the model is especially adapted to asymmetric communicational processes –an active emitter that produces a signal and receivers that passively react to the signal– and it is particularly suited to describing the traditional system of communication instilled between an institution and the public, even though increasing numbers of institutions have recently tried to break out of and overcome such unidirectionality. On closer inspection, though, with possible updates congruent with the needs of modern communication, the questions posed by this model are still valid.

For this reason and due to its indisputable linearity –or better yet, simplicity– Lasswell's model was proposed to the students as an outline to follow when analysing and defining the communication strategy on which the project was established. The model is therefore followed in tracing the description of the experience.

Who communicates?

In the case of the museum, the communicator is the museum as an institution. In a diffuse museum, instead, it consists of institutions, organizations, associations, etc., that is, the different subjects that may be a key part of the community of reference. Each of these subjects has its own individuality, and is differentiated by a particular cultural and social role in the community of reference.

To be able to communicate, however, these individualities should nevertheless be organized according to a single "voice", that is, they should be coordinated by a subject responsible for communication which therefore plays the role of "who". This figure should have, or develop for the purpose, its own characteristic identity that will be revealed through the action of communication, an unveiling that is a necessary attribute and qualitative element of the communication.

In the case study adopted, a careful analysis of the different subjects operating in the area was made and the Palazzo Merulana [2] museum was chosen as the "one responsible for communication" because it has always been dedicated to cultural participation as a factor of so-

cial inclusion and welfare and is therefore already significantly integrated in the surrounding urban context. This was a strategic choice for the project because it would guarantee the necessary stability and continuity and also the necessary visibility to favour broad participation.

More in general, the choice represents a method for enhancing the city by reinforcing the relationships between the various "cultural places". The method aims to initiate a profitable interweaving between city, citizens, and museums, attributing to the latter a central role in understanding the cultural heritage, stimulating the participation and creativity of citizens, enhancing the memory of the past, and feeding the awareness of historical, civic, and symbolic values that permeate the heritage.

It is an opportunity for museums to expand their range of action beyond the good practice already shared today of "before, during, and after", which temporarily extended museum visits well beyond the strictly necessary stay (during), leading the visitor through a more complex and detailed experience, preparing visitors (before) and accompanying them (after).

This serves as an opportunity for museums to expand their range of action in space as well, working on the relationship between "inside" and "outside". This is a new role for cultural places, which can become hubs of culture and creativity, places for inclusion and democratic prac-

Fig. 3. The card, the fulcrum of the project The Esquilino Tales. The front is created by Giulia D'Alia. The back is created by Simone Amarante.
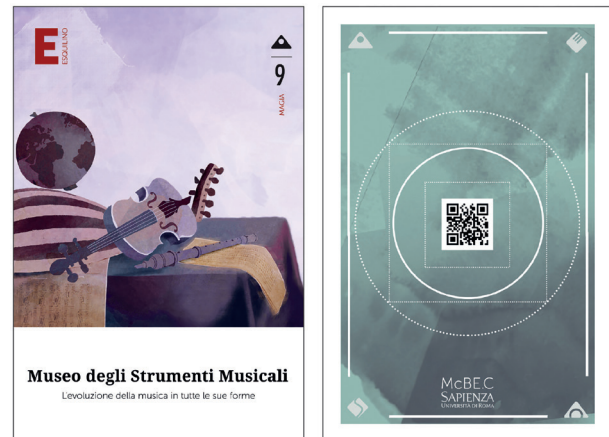
Fig. 4. Some representative cards of the Magic perspective (the number 4 created by Giulia Flenghi; the number 7 created by Francesca Troiani) and the Memory perspective (the number 1 created by Federica Giannoni; the number 10 created by created by Simone Amarante).

Tempio di Minerva Medica
Non luogo di culto, ma villa di lusso nell'antica Roma

Basilica ipogea a Porta Maggiore
Misterioso luogo di culto neopitagorico

Palazzo Massimo alle Terme
Conserva al suo interno l'arte classica di Roma

Santa Croce in Gerusalemme
Racchiude le reliquie della Croce di Cristo

tice, and interacting with citizens through the territory, entertaining stable relationships with schools, universities, and companies. In doing so, they incarnate «the role of laboratories of knowledge and widespread accelerators of ideas, through and within which they not only generate mechanisms of cultural and creative fertilization, but also, as a direct results, personal and collective growth» [Asproni 2018].

To whom?

Assessments of possible answers to this apparently simple question start with the theories and practices of Audience Development, which, included in Europe Creative financing programmes since 2014, aim to identify areas of possible development to expand and diversify the cultural public.
In fact, despite important policies, even economic ones, implemented in the last twenty years, the rate of participation in cultural production in Europe and even more so in Italy is still low and the public reached has been mostly the same for more than 50 years: «white, cultured, well-off, middle aged» [Gariboldi 2017].
The different markets that can potentially be developed through cultural production include those under 18 years of age (which represent more than 17% of the population in Italy, with 12-18 year olds equal to about 6%). The world of culture has been particularly attentive to this sector of the public in recent years with a varied range of dedicated activities. More in general, there is growing awareness of the role that culture plays in the growth of a person as a whole, which has even led to an extensive interpretation of the notion of "human capital" in economic studies [Cingano, Cipollone 2009] [3].
Despite this renewed attention, the numbers for Italy in the field of educational instruction are not comforting, with a rate of dispersion that is still very high: more than 14% compared to 10% as the European average, growing from the north to the south and greater where less culture is presented.
Finally, with more specific regard to relationships between youths and the city, some interesting experiences in participatory planning show how the involvement of teenagers creates positive effects well beyond the specific topic. The experience of sharing reignites the motivation to design one's own future and participate in the all-round education of conscious, responsible citizens [Corbisiero, Berritto 2017].

These considerations therefore motivated the choice to direct the project *The Esquilino Tales* not to the public as a whole, but to its younger members, particularly secondary school students, accompanied by their families and in the context of education/school and culture/museum. The goal is for them to rebuild their role in their relationship with the city, that is, the space where they live and determine their future.

With what effects?

The expected results are obviously also consistent with and integrated into the set of choices above.Bringing younger citizens closer to their cities' heritage has the general scope of raising awareness about their active relationship with society, which is «one with our language, music, and literature, our culture». Due to the capillary spread through the territory of the «model of Italy», we 'also find it «without wanting to or without thinking about it in the streets of our cities, the buildings where our homes, schools, offices are, in churches open for worship» [Settis 2002, p. 10].

This heritage covers an inestimable number of items, but especially inestimable vitality of the values that they hold. It may be a possible key to an opportunity for growth and participation for young people, and therefore a flywheel to bridge the educational gap and cognitive poverty, favouring greater inclusion in culture and a broader range of resources to develop our territories and society.

To say what? Esquilino

The motives for experimenting with the diffuse museum in the Esquilino quarter include tracing 150 years of history of Rome as the capital of Italy. It was here, in fact, that building began in 1870 to create an entire neighbourhood in order to adapt the city, which then had little more than 200,000 residents, to its role as the capital of a country. This was an impressive urban renewal project, with the construction of representative buildings, palaces, and residences for public workers and white-collar workers in the new administration, along with broad avenues and squares, with a focus on Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, where more than a kilometre of imposing porticos surrounds the spacious botanical garden created around

Fig. 5. Some representative cards of the Transition perspective (the number 1 created by Federica Giannoni; the number 6 created by Angela Moschetti) and the Fusion perspective (the number 1 created by Simone Amarante; the number 2 created by created by Margherita Stisi).

Fig. 6. The various initial tests and references: Neapolitan and French playing cards (above), collectible Magic: The Gathering cards, (middle), the gaming platform Gris (bottom) also applied to the tomb of Eurisace.
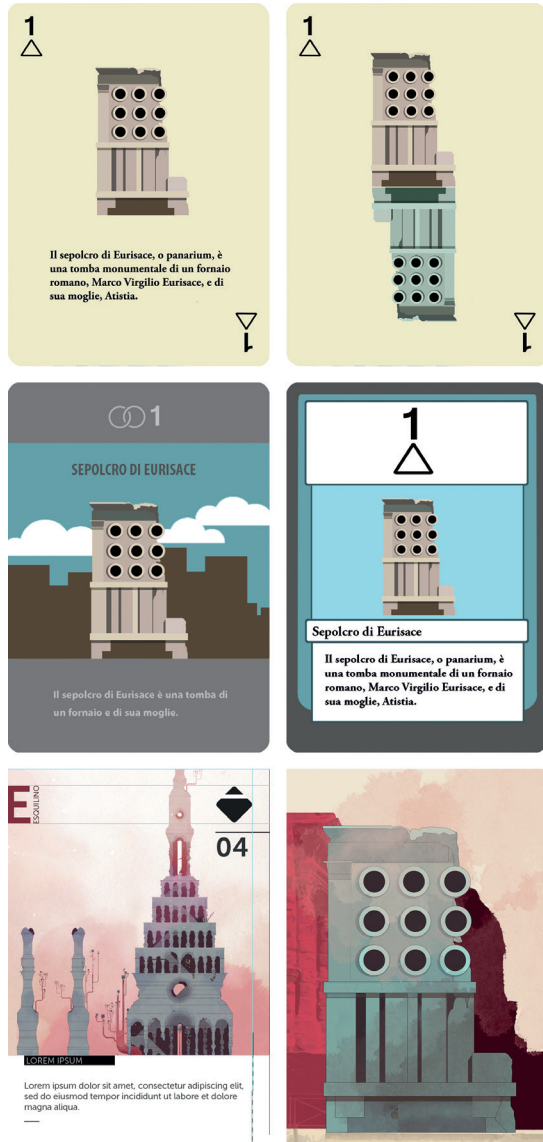
the ruins of the Nymphaeum of Alexander monumental fountain.

This is the starting point to explore an entire neighbourhood that, while at the centre of Rome, is mostly unknown, not only by tourists, but also by residents of Rome. It is a sort of enclave that houses important historical remains from the thousand-year-old history of the 'Eternal City' and the more recent history of modern Italy. Of Republican Rome, when the Esquilino hill, the highest in Rome, was a suburb only partially falling within the Servian Wall, while outside lay the crowded, dangerous Suburra. Of Augustinian Rome when it was annexed to the city and public structures and villas were built for rich patricians. Of Christian Rome, with the churches of San Pietro in Vincoli, Santa Pudenziana, Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Prassede, and San Martino ai Monti. Of Sistine Rome when Santa Maria Maggiore became the focus of the new city design based on a network of churches, roadways, and obelisks. Of the capital of Italy after 1870: Rome under Umberto I, Rome in the 1920s, Rome after the Second World War, and modern Rome. This is a complex urban situation where important Roman remains with great archaeological and aesthetic interest coexist with newer architecture from the unity of Italy; where the squares, the expression of the geometric rigour of the Savoys, host places for the most diverse ethnicities to come together and meet; where the strategic railway nodes for the entire city and beyond still interweave with the ancient gates that separated Imperial Rome from the outer world; where the buildings are an indelible testimony of Fascist brutality, but also the fight of the resistance for the liberation of Rome; where novels and films of post-war and contemporary Italy echo in the streets.

This is a layered reality that has known how to reconfigure itself throughout history to adapt to growth and physical transformation and to subsequent migration and globalization, denoted by a variety of both built space and the people living there: a multitude of cities rather than just one city.

The Esquilino neighbourhood therefore holds a special heritage well adapted to the diffuse museum. In contrast to a 'traditional' museum where goods are acquired, collected, ordered stored, and displayed to the public, each day in the quarter presents a living reality whose individual parts continuously interact with the places and artefacts, reciprocally modifying each other.

To be promoted, this special heritage requires working on the possible connections with a mechanism that is at heart very similar to guides, which, starting in the first half of the 1800s, freed the larger public, allowing them to individually and independently plan their trips. These are particular devices in which, without an author, the places presented to the reader/traveller through possible itineraries come to the fore [Ragonese 2010] and where the plot woven between places and the traveller builds an attitude about the travel experience, whether real or virtual [Mangani 2007]. Such guides did not invent this mechanism; rather, it derived from the different implementation of the inhabited space –atlases, maps, itineraries etc.– which were more recently renewed by cinema [4].

Nevertheless, the focus of each type of museum and therefore also diffuse museums, is always its collection, that is, an 'ordered' collection of 'objects' of the same type, thereby forming a relatively coherent, meaningful set [Desvallées, Mairesse 2010, p. 26] (fig. 1).

Fig. 7. The four backgrounds corresponding to the four narrative perspectives, each characterized by a prevalent chromatic tones: violet/blue for Magic, grey for Memory, green/teal for Transition, orange/ochre for Fusion (created by Simone Amarante).
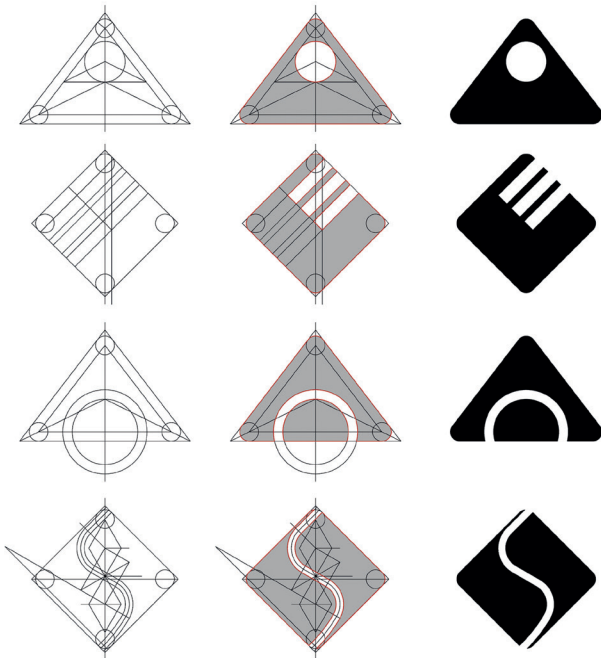
Fig. 8. The procedure: construction of the 'figure' –starting from the photographic documentation through retracing and some particular brushstrokes– followed by insertion in the background of the visual (by James Douch).
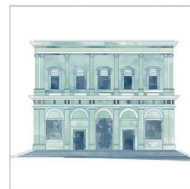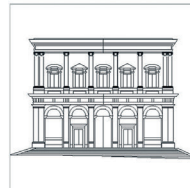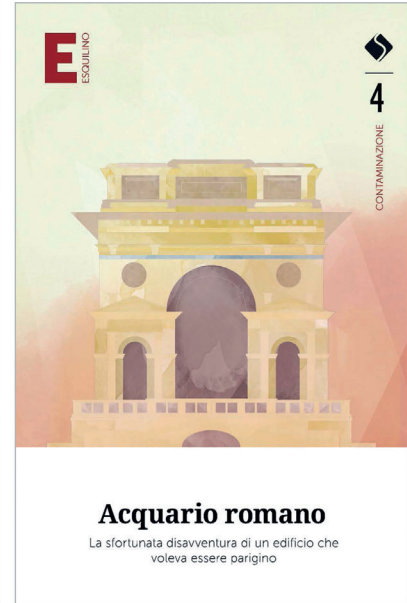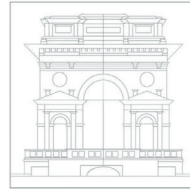
In parallel to the expansion of the heritage –from material to intangible– the types of objects in museum collections first expanded –no longer just physical objects, but also related practices, expressions, knowledge, and cultural spaces that communities recognize as an integral part of their cultural heritage [UNESCO 2003]– and then the museum space shifted from a closed space, a container of objects, to include the outdoors.

Despite these transformations, a museum is always characterized by a collection of "objects" –material and nonmaterial– that are essentially "sensory" objects, that is, interpreted and understood with the senses and "ordered", or at least connected to create a system with the overriding goal of being «exhibited for public viewing» [Pomian 1987, p. 18].

Fig. 9. The 'suits': construction of the ideograms representing the four families, that is, the four narrative perspectives.

In this framework and in the case of the Esquilino neighbourhood, but for urban spaces in general, the goods fall under the extended definition of "architecture", where both the whole and its individual parts are therefore recognizable primarily as "figures". The project therefore began with the conviction that a proposal for its effective use could only start with the specific signs of the places, that is, its possible representations. This gave rise to the concept of the communication project that describes each urban reality through a set of 40 cards (fig. 2), which acts like the museum collection, organized into four families (10 numbered cards) referring to a particular themed narrative (itinerary).

In which channels? The structure of *The Esquilino Tales*

Museums are, by definition, «systems of communication» [Lugli 1993, p. 80] based on the use of a "sensory" language analogous to the objects in the collection, which are "sensory" objects, that is, they can be interpreted and understood with the senses. A museum's capacity for communication therefore depends mostly «on the non-verbal language of the objects and observable phenomena» [Cameron 1968, p. 34], that is, visual language.

This supposes, however, that for the communication to be effective, the public shares the set of codes used in the communication. Communicating means "placing in common", i.e. the only way to make someone else participate in the content. Each act of communication, or any type of "text" in general, also implies rules to be shared, which also applies to the empty spaces left by the author to the interpretational, and therefore cooperative, initiative of the reader [Eco 1991].

Therefore, in the Esquilino communication project, the students/authors/curators built the communication as a combination of iconic constructs accompanied by textual and acoustic attributes. This means of communication was designed starting with the figurative imagery of the chosen public (teenagers between 13 and 18) such that they may possess the codes necessary for deciphering and comprehension.

The communication project is also built by relying on that «lazy mechanism» that Umberto Eco traces in each text «that lives on the added value of sense introduced by the target» [Eco 1991, p. 52]. Therefore, both the complexity and non-uniformity of the Esquilino area, which

are impossible to describe from only one point of view, and the need for synthetic, involved communication that induces the public/visitor to participate actively, led to the technique of gamification as the anchor for the communication project.

In fact, theories of learning show that the "action/response" cycle underlying each game activates motivated involvement, transforming "simple" seeing or listening into "creating" an experience, and even storytelling into storydoing [Viola, Idone Cassone 2017], with no distinction between narrator and listener, spectator and actor.

The scientific interest in play is not related to an abstract system of rules, but rather the concrete behaviour that is realized in the act of playing itself, i.e. play or performance commonly associated with the concept of pleasure [Eco 1973]. The interest lies in fun activities as a subjective state, as has recently been shown in cognitive science studies. The particular disposition of the subjects involved in the interaction, who interpret the situation as a game, allows investigators to understand the «circumstances in which people say they are "playing" or "being playful" while involved in activities that are objectively not games» [Paglieri 2002, p. 376].

Some recent experiences in the communication of cultural goods have also shown how play can be an effective way to bring users to the heritage [Albisinni, Ippoliti 2016; Lampis 2018; Luigini, Panciroli 2018; Pescarin 2020].

Indeed, by activating an interactive relationship, the emotional environment of the game facilitates learning processes because «Play is a very serious matter […] It is an expression of our creativity; and creativity is at the very root of our ability to learn, to cope, and to become whatever we may be» (Rogers, Sharapan 1994). As educators know well, nothing is more serious than play, which is indispensable for individuals and also the community «by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and associations, in short, as a culture function» [Huizinga 1949, p. 9].

Having discarded video games for various reasons [5], after an analysis of the most common table games [6], the choice fell on collectible game cards [7] for the experience of the Esquilino neighbourhood. As recently demonstrated, these combine the methods of play with the passion for collection, a particular connection that lends a capacity to spread virally, that is, to self-promote itself.

The system of representation proposed for the Esquilino quarter therefore starts with a deck of 40 cards divided into four families (10 numbered cards), intended as a set of "open communication" where the public's contribution, while entailing a "simple" game, requires particular dedication.

As mentioned above, while only experimenting with the Esquilino area, the concept of the project is designed to be suitably customized and replicated for different urban areas with recognizable characteristics, a condition that also favours the spread of the game through the

Fig. 10. Tests to define the layout, particularly the front of the card (experimentation by James Douch and Simone Amarante).

proliferation of decks of cards. This simple structure and its related connections –card/family/deck/decks– transforms the cards into collector objects that, with their easy spread and competition between players underlying any game, is a further push for interaction due to the need for exchange.

To favour the experience of visiting the cultural heritage housed in cities, the rules of the game require the player to increase the power of their cards when they interact with a cultural element, entailing progressive increases in power according to the different means of access and actions: at a distance (QR code, app, or website), directly through a tour, completing an itinerary from among those proposed, etc.

Once the objective has been fixed, players can thereby implement different strategies to earn power individually or as a team through interaction with the cultural good. The rules of the game require players to personalize each round, setting out variations in the deck to complete or modifying the default composition by replacing individual cards while keeping the number and families fixed.

With this simple game, *The Esquilino Tales* diffuse museum responds at heart to the mission of every museum, that is, favouring learning by performing its educational function.

### In which channels? *The Esquilino Tales* system of representation

While the fulcrum of the project lies in the individual card, (analogous in its digital variations with the role of interface to access the cultural content, fig. 3), the game is structured so that one would preferably discover the Esquilino district following the cards in a family, that is, via one of the four particular visuals proposed in each deck. Each visual creates a connection between the individual points of interest (places and histories that they summarize) described on each card, thereby composing a specific tour. Therefore, after careful analysis of the tangible and intangible heritage of the Esquilino area, the four visuals according to which the points of interest are grouped are: Magic, Memory, Transition, and Blend/Fusion/Influence (figs. 4, 5). As can be easily understood, these visuals represent categories and qualities with a level of generalization such that they may be used effectively to describe other urban areas. More than being related to a particular object, they refer to a particular experience

that can be had by crossing urban places: an unexpected view, the dreamlike aspect of a story, the fascination of a show or concert, aesthetic enjoyment of a work of art, the memory of old history, the evocation of recent history, the transition between one era and another made physically by crossing a city, the connection between apparently different places, the evidence of modern multiculturalism, the stratification that condenses an urban space, the perennial co-existence between sacred and secular etc. Once the structure of the game and principal rules had been defined, the graphical elements were designed –figures, colours, backgrounds, symbols, characters, layouts– such that they worked together to orient players starting out on a trip through *The Esquilino Tales*. Therefore, each place and its associated history is represented by a figure, while the visual narrative (Magic, Memory, Transition, Fusion) is entrusted both to the colour palette and a symbol (suit).

For the figures, the goal was to define a recognizable style. After various tests [8] (fig. 6), it was decided that these figures should be borderless and emerge from the juxtaposition of mostly regular geometric shapes. Only flat colour tones, selected from within the same chromatic tonality would be used, simulating the use of watercolour with different brush sizes in the digital environment. The next step was to associate a prominent chromatic tone with each of the narrative visuals (violet/blue for Magic, grey for Memory, green/teal for Transition, orange/ochre for Fusion), followed by development of the four corresponding backgrounds (fig. 7), these characterized by soft, sinuous forms that, except for minor modifications, were adopted for all cards pertaining to the same family (fig. 8). The next step was to design the graphics of the different suits (fig. 9). An ideogrammatic stylization was chosen to express the four visuals, each characterized by iconographic uniformity with respect to the shape (triangle, square, circle, and rounded corners) and colour (black). Following this, to avoid disorienting the player, the layout was defined for the arrangement of the graphical elements in the compositional space of the cards, which measure 8 cm × 12 cm (fig. 10). On the front, the upper left contains the "E" and the text "Esquilino", which are balanced on the right by the suit, the card number, and the name of the visual. Vertically, the space of the card is divided into two parts: the top contains the figure situated on the background, while below, there is a white band that contains the name of the place, centred (bold serif
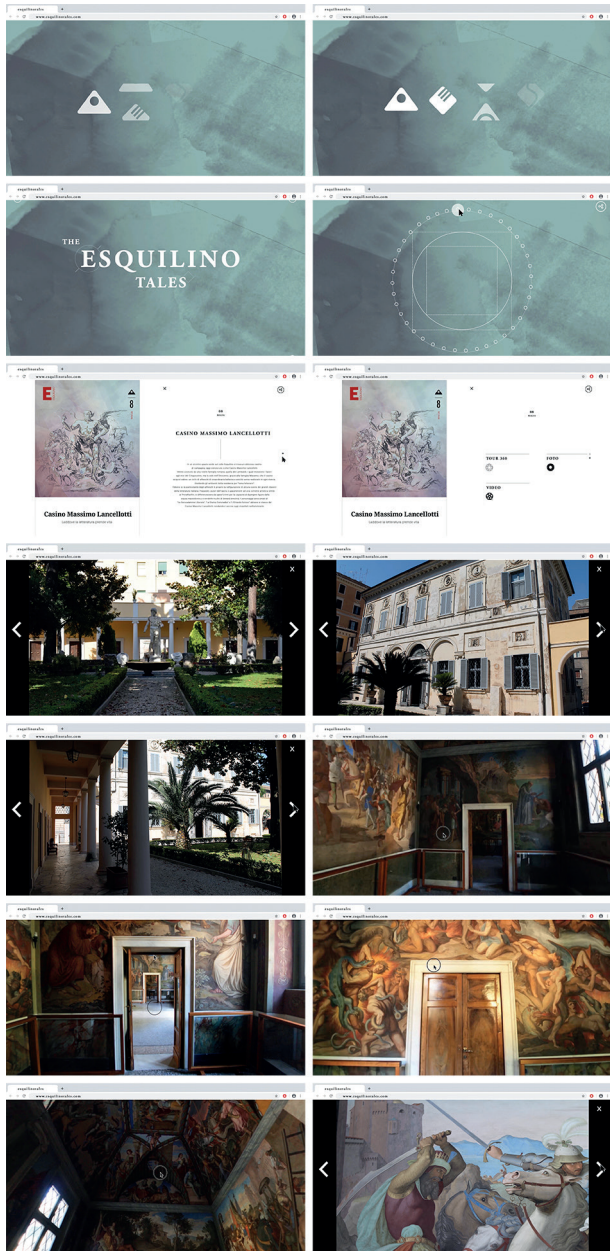
Figs. 11, 12. The experience The Esquilino Tales offered by the website. After animation similar to a slot machine, one can access a dedicated page in the footer, in which the data and information are summarized, or begin the experience. The exploration of the Casino Massimo Lancellotti: in fig. 11 the virtual tour and the photographic slide show (created by Simone Amarante, James Douch, and Federica Giannoni); in fig. 12 the video (created by Simone Amarante).
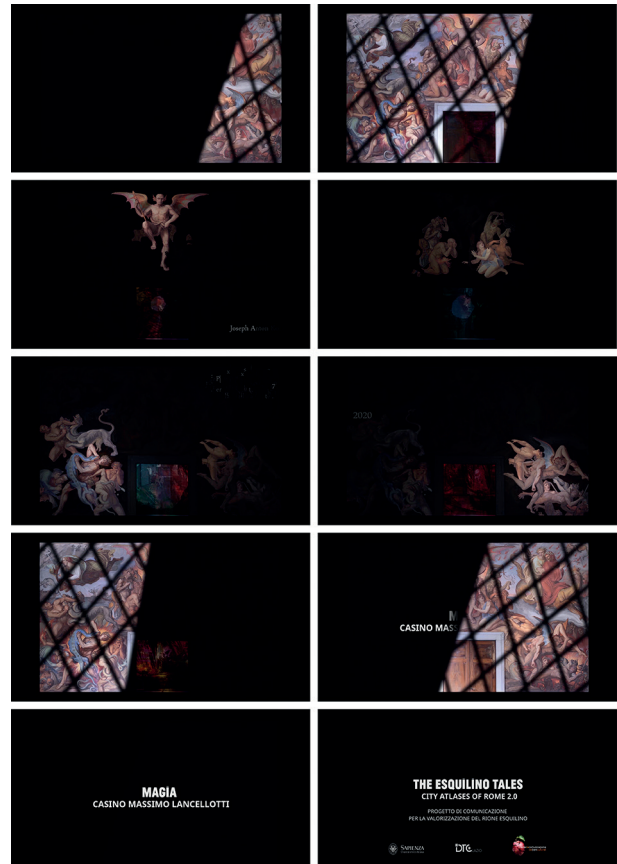
font of a size designed to be read easily), along with a subtitle that hints at the history (sans serif characters of a notably smaller size).

For the back of the cards, the graphical choices were consistent with those described above. The four suits are situated at the corners of the card, but in grey, on a background similar to the one on the front, but with a non-interfering colour tone. Finally, a combination of circles and squares circumscribes the space containing the QR code (fig. 3) for access to multimedia content available in the form of text or images – iconography, photographs, panoramas to be navigated, brief videos (figs. 11, 12). The different types of content are assigned different roles in the narration. Videos introduce the history and create an empathic relationship with players in order to capture them in the game. Spherical panoramas offer a partially immersive and interactive tour via hot spots. The iconography and photographic images summarize the main features of the places, and the texts underline the characteristics and relate facts and events. The structure of links through the QR code allows interest in play to be maintained through constant, continuous updating of the content, implemented by expert curators and editorial staff.

Fig. 13. The experience The Esquilino Tales as first action for enhancement and urban regeneration of Rome city.

A summary representation of *The Esquilino Tales* is found on the home page, the interface for the curators and editorial staff, where an animated graphic similar a slot machine is built in analogy with the front of the cards. The 4 suits of families/visuals appear, ending with the field *The Esquilino Tales*, which lies at the centre. At the end of the animation, the visitor/player is presented with 40 small circles that rotate on the path of a larger circle. By clicking on one of the small circles, the player randomly accesses an individual card. After the textual presentation of the experience, the player can then move on to different content (360° tour, photographic slide show, video) by selecting the corresponding icon. (figs. 11, 12).

Conclusion

This experimentation investigated the practices of representation, innovating with them through the techniques of storytelling, gamification, and storydoing, with the aim of developing a communication strategy within a wide range of graphical/visual languages. In this strategy, active means of exploration such as initial actions for enhancement and urban regeneration are proposed for initiation between the visitors/citizens and the Esquilino district/city to begin to rescue our city [9] (fig. 13).

With The Esquilino Tales the challenge was to hold physical and virtual places together through the interfaces/representations imagined as new agorae where connections can be made between visitors, experts, and cultural goods. This system of representations is a start to exploring the Esquilino district, mixing past and present, monumental memories and recent history, life in Rome and multiculturalism, local and global, inclusion and exclusion, architectural style and spatial indeterminacy.

In our opinion, this experience falls entirely under the more general area of "city representations", a particular family of representations with an extremely wide range of types and variations spanning the entire array of representational conventions –from figures to signs, from concept to plausibility– all of which are similar since they are emotional devices. This emotional capacity to suggest histories and interpretations is still present in city representations, albeit with forms that have changed and undergone innovation due to new media. The representations encompass different registers of figures (static images, graphics and photographs, and moving images) organized like an atlas, where the atlas acts as a tool

for deconstructing reality, reconfiguring it and communicating it as the juxtaposition of fragments of memories.
The Esquilino Tales is therefore a "machine for thinking" due to that imaginative mechanism that is activated by recognizing an undefinable proximity and affinity in a series of representations, that is, that certain «air of family» [Settis,

2017, p. 97]. While it seems impossible to reconcile single and multiple, identity and community in certain years, this "machine for thinking" offers a set of possible views of the Esquilino district to reconstruct the topography of an imaginable but tangible city that holds together memory and future.

Notes

[1] The experience was carried out with students in the Master in Communication of Cultural Goods at the Sapienza University of Rome, started by the Department of History, Design and Restoration of Architecture and the School of Architecture. Collaborating in the experience were Leonardo Paris, Cristian Farinella, Lorena Greco, and Stefano Volante.

[2] The multipurpose space of Palazzo Merulana, the site of the Fondazione Elena e Claudio Cerasi with a collection of works from the Roman school and the Italian twentieth century, opened in 2018 following restoration of the former Esquilino Ufficio di Igiene.

[3] Of particular interest is a study by Federico Cingano and Piero Cipollone published in Questioni di economia e finanza edited by the Bank of Italy, to measure the economic effects of investments in education. Indeed, these are higher than what can be obtained from financial or infrastructure investments and generally suggest that overall, profits from the community point of view would be even higher.

[4] The reflection was widely expressed by Bruno 2006. According to the author, emotional attitudes towards virtual tours is cultivated and developed over time by different forms of the inhabited space. This emotional capacity is present in cartography even in the modern age, while having changed into other forms such as in cinema. For Bruno, cinema is therefore the new geography, that is, the favoured medium for evoking emotion by observing the landscape, the city, and its architecture, which are represented through that wandering incorporated in cinema itself.

[5] Various reasons include the economic resources necessary to create a video game with a setting that could produce emotional involvement and

compete with what is currently on the market, as shown, for example, by the editions of Rome Video Game Lab held annually since 2018. More in general, we are convinced by what Alessandro Baricco says, 'Game is a most difficult habit, one that offers intensity in exchange for insecurity, generates inequalities, and is not appropriate for many people' «*il Game è un habitat molto difficile, che offre intensità in cambio di insicurezza, genera disuguaglianze e non è adatto a un sacco di gente*» [Baricco 2018, p. 196].

[6] Among the different types of table games analysed, we mention only the main, best-known ones, including, 'path' games – snakes and ladders, Taboo etc. – luck and statistics – Risk, Monopoly, etc. – abstract – chess, checkers, backgammon, etc.

[7] One of the reasons for choosing collectable cards is also the very strong iconographic relationships that tie these cards to art history, as shown by Lampis 2018, pp. 270, 271.

[8] Different references range from Neapolitan and French playing cards to collectible Magic: The Gathering cards, as well as the gaming platform Gris (developed by Nomada Studio and directed by Conrad Roset) and the 2D side-scrolling game Father and Son (created by Ludovico Solima at the Luigi Vanvitelli University of Campania for the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, with scientific supervision by director Paolo Giulierini and development by Tuo Museo by the game designer Fabio Viola).

[9] The experience was presented at one of the laboratory encounters organized within the project/show *Riscatti di Città. La rigenerazione urbana a Roma* [Rescuing the City. Urban Regeneration in Rome], Palazzo Merulana, held between 18 January and 17 February 2020.

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