J - READING

JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND DIDACTICS IN

GEOGRAPHY

homepage: www.j-reading.org

Community maps for territorial education: inputs for a methodology from Nativi Project

Giampietro Mazza, Giacomo Zanolin[a]

[a] Department of Education Science, University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy
Email: giacomo.zanolin@unige.it

Abstract

In recent years, despite globalisation processes, that have contributed to uniform societies, generating a constant loss of effectiveness of the local, practices of territorial development aimed at highlighting local peculiarities and the places that define a territory, in which communities identify themselves, are strongly emerging. Participatory processes can play a decisive role in identifying the reference places for a community, through which citizens are called upon to make decisions in governance processes. This is the case of community maps, which represent a clear example of subjective and participatory representation of space. In community maps, place becomes the territorial dimension of reference. These assumptions form the basis of the Native Project, which aims to encourage secondary schools students to discover places, starting a process aimed at creating community maps and territorial storytellings to stimulate a greater awareness of territorial values, with the hope of enhancing their sense of citizenship.

1. Introduction

In this paper we will present the results of a pilot project conducted in two secondary schools situated in Lombardy, the purpose of which was to construct a teaching methodology aimed at bringing to light territorial values as perceived and experienced by secondary school students. The project was named Nativi (Narratori Attivi di Territorio – Active Local Storytellers); developed through a partnership between the Italian Association of Geography Teachers (AIIG) and the Touring Club Italiano (TCI), and funded by Fondazione Cariplo. Its aim was to

encourage new methods of participation in cultural life and create a useful educational tool for the rediscovery of territorial values beyond those conventionally identified as heritage assets. Accordingly, we decided to test a participatory process, in order to strengthen the feelings of citizenship in secondary school students, in the belief that this can have an impact on the enhancement and promotion of local tourism in lesser known destinations.

The project was carried out in two technical institutes for tourism in Erba and Vimercate, located respectively in the province of Como

and in the Metropolitan City Area of Milan. In practical terms, it was included in the teaching curriculum as part of the Transversal Skills and Orientation Courses (PCTO). As we shall see, these two different geographical contexts allowed us to experiment with different aspects of the process undergoing development, while at the same time highlighting a number of critical issues related to the relationship between the town in which the school is located and the wider territory where the project was conducted.

Broadly speaking, the project was structured into two main phases: the first aimed at bringing out the values of the area through a participatory process based on the community map concept; the second geared towards producing, with training provided by professionals from TCI, a multimedia storytelling of the values that emerged during the first phase.

As mentioned, Nativi began as a pilot project, with the hope of being able to replicate the newly developed methodology in other schools and contexts. In this regard, this paper will present, in addition to the results of the project, some reflections on the strengths and weaknesses detected in the field and the conclusions we reached in terms of its remodelling and implementation.

2. Theoretical Insights

2.1. Territorial education, active citizenship and participatory processes

The International Charter on Geography Education declares that "geographical education is imperative for the development of responsible and active citizens in the present and future world" (IGU, 2016, p. 1). This reflects the close interrelationship between geography and education, as regards the links between, pedagogy, training and geographical space in today's world (Van der Schee, 2014). In defining the concept of space in an educational context, the relationship between societies and the physical dimension of places emerges strongly, as well as the symbolic values they hold for people in general. We can regard this as a fundamental declaration of principle when presenting the theoretical framework on which the Nativi project was created as it views the territory as a participatory and shared part of the formation of a community (Giorda, 2011; Dematteis and Giorda, 2013; Giorda and Puttilli, 2019). The territory, away from the power logic, becomes a living space (Magnaghi, 1998) in which each person's individual life project is realised, characterised by a combination of networks, flows and places, in which the community identifies, therby playing an important educational role (Giorda, 2011; Dematteis and Giorda, 2013; Giorda and Puttilli, 2019). These considerations are a prerequisite for a much needed strengthening of the relationship between geography and education to promote the development of a paradigm for pedagogical planning focused on highlighting the human significance in places, thereby allowing the value of inhabiting spaces to emerge, since "man is man insofar as he inhabits. To be human means: to be on earth as mortal, meaning: to inhabit" (Heidegger, 1976, p. 98).

Geography, is responsible for teaching how to form multiple identities (individual and territorial) and, through the affirmation of an understanding of being an integral part of a territory, plays a crucial role in human development (De Vecchis et al., 2020). We should therefore ask ourselves where we are and where our everyday life unfolds, since our identity is inseparable from the physical space that we territorialise continuously, for, as Casey states "to live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in" (Casey, 1996 p. 18). For this reason, the Nativi project promoted an educational and participatory process among the students of the two schools involved, so as to generate in them an awareness that the "territory [is] a space for living, in which to create the life project of individuals and societies" (Giorda and Puttilli 2011, p. 17), thus essentially becoming the spatial reference in a collective project for creating of a common living space. By recognising that there is no hierarchy between what we might call exceptional and ordinary places, Nativi encourages a sense of active citizenship related to making each inhabitant aware of a place's role in defining the sense of a place. In effect, places are imbued with a high value that each individual develops and manifests, thus contributing to conferring a symbolic

recognition on them (De Vecchis et al., 2008). The emotional connection that binds each one of us to a place conditions our spatial experience, since we constantly process and produce mental maps containing images and perceptions. This creates enduring connections between experiences and places, which "is not only a fact that must be explained within the broader structure of space, but is also a reality that must be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who give it meaning" (Tuan, 1978, p. 92).

Nativi's aim is also to help students recognise the emotional value of places by facilitating educational methods related to the territory's values, while simultaneously identifying and positioning themselves within the lived space, allowing them to think of themselves as an active part of a community (Mazza and Zanolin, 2023). This contributes to the establishment of what Paolo Molinari defined as the "true knowledge of the territory, based on the development of spatial-temporal understanding and on direct experience [...] which, by means of a gradually more conscious gaze, allows community members to become active citizens, capable of enhancing their past, of gaining a better understanding and interpretation of the present and of being able to imagine (and plan) their future on material and immaterial bases" (Molinari, 2017, p. 18). Compared to conventional training approaches, where students are taught what heritage is and what cultural assets characterise it, in this case we opted for the opposite course, beginning with their own experiences to define the features of their own heritage in terms of being an active community in the area. From a territorial point of view, the notion of community focuses on the space in which the subjects operate and interact socially, and on the genesis of these ties, both in terms of quantity and quality (and motivation) of the relations (Petrella, 2022). Hence, we can see how the community develops in terms of sharing and reciprocity. Nativi offers inputs for a methodology for territorial education, stimulating the community of reference to act as a territorial entity in which networks and social relations develop between individuals connected to each other by differing relationships. In essence, "education must contribute to the self-training of the person and teach them how to become a citizen" (Morin, 2000, p. 65).

Within the dimension of territorial instruction one finds "Place-Based Education" (Smith, 2002), the aim of which is to stimulate students to develop sustainable social relationships that allow them to become aware of events outside the school environment and the possible positive effects of implementing a responsible behaviour within one's own community (Giorda and Rosmo, 2021). This pedagogical methodology represents the logical premise on which Nativi's principles and intentions are based. In this way, territorial education also becomes citizenship education, stimulating the sense of active participation among those involved in the process. In the same light, the second part of the project investigated the storytelling dimension, recognising the unbreakable link between territorial values and the narrative practices that form their meaning (Bonacini, 2021). By stimulating students to produce multimedia storytelling, we sought to go beyond a simple account of what exists, constructing instead a narrative that gave meaning to the places identified. Since "each of us is nothing more than a story to which we add something new every day" (Demetrio, 2012, p. 28), through the storytelling phase, we tried to complete the process of triggering a sense of citizenship linked to an increase in awareness of each student's role in the processes of territorial enhancement. This is particularly important for students who are being trained as potential future tour operators to ensure that they do not become "sellers" of the territory but promoters of it. The difference between these two concepts is the underlying element that defines the objectives of the Nativi project, as will be further clarified in the following pages.

2.2. Community maps and Territorial Storytelling

Community mapping is undoubtedly one of the better tools for active citizenship participation. There is a well-established tendency to interpret maps beyond their basic material value, favouring instead their significance as communication tools that play a key role in the territorialisation through the process of a symbolic appropriation of space

(Casti, 1998). Nowadays, far from being merely a representation of the world, maps have assumed a higher status, replacing reality itself and thus becoming a powerful instrument when asserting a specific view of reality (Farinelli, 2003, 2009). Cosequently, today we cannot help but see it as an actor operating in the territorialisation process by conveying messages that arise from complex social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that unfold in the territory on different scales, while at the same time also helping to produce these same dynamics. A critical approach to cartography allows us thus to highlight the prevalence of its chorographic nature, as opposed to its traditional topographical format, that precisely reflects the map's role as a complex system capable of conveying social and cultural values within the territory and emphasising the importance of multiple subjective points of view that converge in the representation of the world produced through the map (Casti, 2013). The spaces represented in the maps are therefore no longer *topos*, defined and closed entities, but rather *chôra*, i.e. subjects endowed with an existential and relational nature (Berque, 2019).

This approach to cartography has well-established roots, deriving from the deconstructivist approach (Harley, 1989), and also from the intense theoretical debate that ensued both during the 1990s (Farinelli, 1992; Jacob, 1992; Wood, 1992; Pickles, 1995) and during the first two decades of the 21st century (Crampton, 2003; Pickles, 2004; Taylor, 2005; Levy, 2008; Casti, 2013). Among various ramifications adopted by such studies, one in particular has been codified as participatory cartography, since it specifically focuses on the desire to represent the territory using the perceptions of the community that inhabits it (Burini, 2016). In short, these are mapping strategies based on the principle of participation, namely the inclusion of the individual actor in the formation of a common project, promoting collaboration between different actors and highlighting the role played by each within the community (Perkins, 2007; Burini, 2019).

Community maps can, in many respects, be considered as a subgroup of participatory cartography since they transcend traditional geographical maps and focus on the experiences, stories and resources of the community itself.

Community maps originated in England in the 1980s, thanks to geographer Sue Clifford and designer Angela King, in an effort to promote local development through the direct involvement of local communities (Clifford and King, 1996). The two academics quickly realised that in order to enhance local heritage as identified by the population, a different cartographic tool, one that was easier and more straightforward to read and interpret, had to be adopted (Leslie, 2007). The community mapping process triggers a procedure whereby the local population and the territory become "active and distinct local actors in the development processes" (Madau, 2015, p. 541), providing a participatory interpretation of the lived-in space (Clifford et al., 2006). Community maps reproduce a self-representation of the identity of the community concerned revealing the social and cultural value it gives to places and to tangible and intangible heritage (Magnaghi, 2010).

In an era dominated by globalisation, despite the processes of standarisation that seemingly weaken the local scale, the place retains a crucial role for the local population, which still feels a deep sense of belonging towards it notwithstanding its difference from the past (Lussault, 2019). The place is not simply a physical or objective point in the space, but a social construction in which people interact with society and environment. Every place is characterised by a distinct configuration of geographical, social, cultural and economic elements that render it unique (Santos, 1999) and where one can attribute a clear educational importance to the values of its territory (Giorda, 2011). Thus conceived, the concept of place transcends the merely geographical dimension and encompasses the social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that characterise it, reproducing the space in which an individual or a community identifies itself. Hence, Community maps reveal a sense of place (Tuan, 1975), which is influenced by a number of factors, including personal experience, social interactions, memories, cultural representations and sensory perceptions. A complex combination of objective and subjective elements contribute to creating a place's unique identity and generate an emotional bond with it. These maps not only enable the recognition and

confirmation of the value of places for the community, but also represent a historical and sentimental archive of the space it inhabits, enhancing territorial awareness through the local populace's active participation, thereby expressing its own right to citizenship.

Community maps are the material outcome of a collective participatory process. However, the key aspect is not the final output, but the process itself which leads to the identification of a shared image of the territory and the values that it is able to express (Bianchetti, 2013; Ivona et al., 2021). With Community maps, places do not remain merely objects of study, but become spaces of resistance and formation of alternatives. The active participation of local communities and social mobilisation can help transform places making them fairer, more sustainable and more equitable.

The identification of places reveals an emotional cartography of the territory, through which one can provide a unique account of individual and collective values, thanks also to the creation of multimedia storytelling content. This is a useful narrative tool for communicating stories and knowledge, and serves not only as a multidimensional and interactive view of places, but enables stories to be better understood, preserved and assimilated by means of different, cross-cultural communication methods (Sowden, 2012; Barker and Gower, 2010).

Besides having an educational purpose for the students, territorial storytelling, linked to participatory mapping, involves recounting and sharing stories, chronicles and experiences that are linked to a specific territory or place (Burini, 2018). The aim is to use the power of these community stories to convey a sense of identity, belonging and meaning associated with a specific geographical context, thus offering a unique and engaging perspective (Bassano et al., 2019). The underlying assumption is that stories are powerful tools that can stir people's feelings, forging an emotional bond and a shared experience with a territory. They offer an engaging and memorable account of the territory's values, emphasising the human, cultural, social and historical-geographical aspects that define its uniqueness. Basically, storytelling allows the public's attention to be captured by creating specific emotional ties with the local community, hopefully fostering further

exploration of the area.

In addition, storytelling can be an indispensable tool when emphasising the peculiarities of an area's landscape and surroundings, contributing to raising public awareness of the importance of environmental conservation. This type of narrative can promote responsible and sustainable tourism in minor destinations, encouraging visitors to treat the land with respect and preserve it for future generations.

3. Presentation of the geographical area

Before presenting the results of the Nativi project in detail, we would like to provide a brief description of the main characteristics of the territories under study. As outlined above, the pilot phase of the project focused on two schools in Lombardy, located in the cities of Erba and Vimercate.

As of 1 January 2023, Erba, in the province of Como, 40 kilometres north of Milan, had a population of 16,148[1] (Istat, 2023). It is very close to Lake Como, one of the most iconic locations in Lombardy. The merger of several small towns culminated with the formation of Erba in 1935. It has a rich history dating back to Roman times. During the medieval period, the city was an important administrative and commercial centre, traces of which can still be seen in the landscape. Indeed, its medieval town centre and numerous historical buildings bear witness to its rich past and are still important cultural resources for the area. Among these, is the neoclassical Villa Majnoni built around 1820, at the behest of Marquis Francesco Majnoni d'Intignano, on the foundations of a pre-existing structure built in 1351 by the Parravicini family. The villa, one of the historical residences of Italy, is currently privately owned and not open to the public, but the large park that surrounds it is intended for public use and is a meeting place for the community. The historical medieval town centre has Piazza Mercato at its heart, an important commercial hub for the inhabitants of Erba and

---

[1]   Source: https://demo.istat.it/app/?i=D7B&l=it [30.10.2023].

the surrounding area. The square was the venue for local markets and fairs and so gave the square its name. Nowadays, Piazza Mercato still holds weekly markets and serves as an important meeting point for the community. Many events, festivals, concerts and cultural events are held there throughout the year.

The city of Vimercate, as of 1 January 2023, had 25,876 inhabitants (Istat, 2023). Located in the province of Monza and Brianza, Vimercate is renowned both for its historical and cultural heritage, discernible in its streets, squares and ancient buildings, and also for its modernity. Its history dates back to Roman times, when it was an important commercial and agricultural centre. It was during this period that one of the symbols of the city, the San Rocco Bridge, was built. Later fortified in the 12th century, it is now the last fortified bridge in Lombardy. Over the centuries, the city underwent various transformations owing to a succession of different rulers who characterised its architecture. Of particular note is the perfectly preserved medieval historic centre and the Villa Sottocasa, with its adjacent park, built in neoclassical style at the end of the 18th century. In 2001, the villa and park were acquired by the municipality and are now the site of the Museo del Territorio Vimercatese. The heart of Vimercate is Piazza Marconi, an important meeting point for the local community where events and activities are held throughout the year. Nowadays, Vimercate is a dynamic city with a diversified economy. Its proximity to Milan has led to its becoming an important industrial centre, with a significant concentration of companies operating in sectors such as IT, electronics and financial services.

As we will later discuss, many of these features were often considered to have a symbolic value by the students of the two classes involved in the project; they are often the places where the students are able to socialise.

4. Nativi project in Lombardy's schools

The Nativi – Narratori dei Territori Vicini project was piloted in Lombardy its first year, and involved third-year students from two tourism secondary schools: the *Istituto Statale di Istruzione Superiore "G.D. Romagnosi",* in

Erba (Como) and the *Istituto Statale di Istruzione Superiore "E. Vanoni",* in Vimercate (Monza-Brianza). The project began in March 2022 and will conclude in August 2023. As mentioned above, its purpose was the direct involvement of young people in participatory activities aimed at creating Community maps, both to boost their knowledge of territorial values and to encourage the promotion and development of minor tourist destinations.

In particular, the students performed different tasks within the project's four specific activities (Community Mapping; Territorial Storytelling; Web Portals and Augmented Reality; Communication and Diffusion), enabling them to gain hands-on experience of a citizenship process that allows them to interact with space, territory and tangible and intangible resources with greater awareness.

The teenagers carried out various activities during the different phases to identify the places crucial to defining the map of the feelings of their community of reference, that render the area unique and distinctive (Clifford and King, 1996). Places are the cornerstone of the process, each of which is assigned a strong symbolic value in which the community recognises itself, thus becoming the focus of the cartographic narrative. Structured in this way, Nativi gave the youngsters the opportunity to immerse themselves in a process of territorial self-representation from which the sense of place (Tuan, 1975), i.e. the community's subjective experience and perception of a place, is derived. It is therefore not merely a matter of geographical location, but of how, in this case, the teenagers interpret, attribute meaning to and emotionally connect with a particular place.

4.1. Community maps in Lombardy's schools

The creation of the two Community maps required fully inclusive and immersive participatory activities during which the students became territorial actors and emphasised their connections with the territory, bringing out a sense of place possibly differing from person to person according to age, cultural, social and economic background and individual experiences. The community mapping process consisted of eight meetings held both in the

classroom and in the field. During the initial activities, the schoolchildren were challenged to show how they belong to their local area and the feelings that motivate why they chose a particular place. The teenagers conducted qualitative interviews with relatives and acquaintances in their local municipalities to identify additional elements that might distinguish their area. These were followed by field trips to all the municipalities where the students lived, so as to visit the places mentioned and gain greater understanding of their cultural and educational value. In order to optimise the trips, the teenagers were accompanied by the stakeholders they had directly identified, thus obtaining an aspect of the heritage useful for both the narrative of the territories and the mapping process.

The results of the process (Figure 1) show the wide range of places to which the communities in question associate a strong symbolic value and in which their social relations are affirmed through processes of territorialisation (squares, parks, sports stadiums, stations, parish centres, shopping centres, fast food outlets and nightclubs).

The community map of the area around Erba was created by nineteen students from ten local municipalites: Albavilla, Barni, Canzo, Civenna, Erba, Lasnigo, Inverigo, Lurago d'Erba, Ponte Lambro and Rogeno. A total of more than 160 places emerged, among which the teenagers identified ten that, for them, hold a greater symbolic value. The ten locations depicted in Figure 1 were also ranked according to the value of their assets. Some of these, indeed, represent a historical and cultural legacy for the area: this is the case of the Crotto degli Alpini in Albavilla, the Murals in Ponte Lambro, the Church of San Alessandro in Lasnigo and the Pomelasca estate and church in Inverigo; a place that also has an important environmental value. Furthermore, in terms of their environmental heritage, we should mention Viale dei Cipressi, also in Inverigo, and Bellavista Park in Civenna. The other four places with great environmental and social significance for the community are: the Giant Bench in Civenna, Barni Park in Canzo, Lake Casletto in Rogeno and the Majnoni park in Erba.

The class from Vimercate comprised twenty-nine students from fifteen different munici-palities: Agrate Brianza, Arcore, Bellusco, Brugherio, Cambiago, Cavenago, Concorezzo, Correzzana, Mezzago, Oreno, Pessano con Bornago, Sulbiate, Trezzo sull'Adda, Velasca and Vimercate. Owing to the greater number of girls and boys involved, more than 180 locations were surveyed over the students' whole area of provenance. In this case also, a small number of places was selected and graphically represented in the map in Figure 1. The community then established the fourteen places with which it identifies and to which it is most attached, again classifying them according to their heritage value.

The places with a high historical and cultural value are Lampugnani Castle in Sulbiate and the MUST Museum in Vimercate. The historic centre of Vimercate has both historical-cultural and social value, while the Taccani hydroelectric power station in Trezzo sull'Adda has historical-cultural, environmental (owing to the presence of the River Adda) and social value, since on summer evenings the young people meet up on the banks of the river. The castle in Trezzo sull'Adda also is credited with both environmental and historical-cultural value.

The Villa Borromeo d'Adda in Arcore is one of the places recognised as having a strong environmental importance. In addition, Increo Park in Brugherio, Aldo Moro Park in Agrate Brianza, Villa Zoja in Concorezzo and Sottocasa Park and Villa in Vimercate, all serve a social function. A high social value was also accorded to Acquaworld in Concorezzo, Missaglia Municipal Stadium in Agrate Brianza and Piazza Marconi in Vimercate.

Above all, this last social space was acknowledged as one of the most important places of reference even by young people who are not from Vimercate, as their local transportation is often located around this square.

4.2. Multimedia Storytellings in Lombardy's schools

The process of place mapping and the subsequent stage of territorial storytelling played a dual role for the young people from the two schools; it allowed them to gain awareness of the values of the area thereby fulfilling an educational function.

The cultural, social and historical value of the places and territories where they are located was conveyed through the stories. Thanks to the tales of bygone events, historical personalities and local traditions, it was possible to highlight their importance and value to the community. In our case, the exercise centred on the towns of Erba and Vimercate was divided into four processes (cultural mediation; podcasts; photos and videos; publishing) where the students worked jointly, dividing the tasks based on their individual interests. This breakdown resulted in the complete involvement of the students who, supported by experts and encouraged to explore and be curious, learnt techniques of cultural mediation and publishing. Through the use of photographs, videos and podcasts they were able to communicate the values of the area, and convey emotions, emphasising cultural and territorial identities and highlighting the human aspects of the community. By means of compelling stories, the students gained greater awareness of their home territory, which they contribute to territorialising, thereby creating stronger bonds with the territory itself, and helping to foster a greater sense of belonging to it.

As mentioned above, the activities of the second and third phases of the Nativi project were intentionally concentrated on the locations identified by the students only in the municipalities of Erba and Vimercate. Specifically, in Erba, this involved working on the War Memorial, the Majnoni Park and Villa, the Church of Santa Eufemia, the Licinum Theatre, the Contrada Villincino (Erba's medieval town centre) and Piazza Mercato (Market Square), the students' favourite space for socialising (Figure 2). With regard to Vimercate, the places identified during the second and third phases by the students and shown in Figure 2 are: San Rocco Bridge, the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary,

Sant'Antonio Abate Oratory, Sottocasa Park and Villa, the MUST Museum, Trotti Park, the cafés in the town centre and Piazza Marconi, selected by all the students as their favourite place. This is indeed the town square of reference where, as the storytelling shows, the interests and feelings of the community converge. This type of participatory mapping and storytelling process not only showcased the stories of an area, but, more importantly, the stories of the people who live and work there, highlighting also the local community's resilience. Examples of this can be found in the locations and stories of family businesses that produce traditional and locally manufactured items and contribute to local development.

The places depicted on the two Community maps (Figure 2) are enriched by the students' writings and multimedia narrative, the contents of which are accessible using the QR code on the map via the AC Viewer application.

Moreover, these locations were also the focus of the third Augmented Reality phase, with which the students expanded the narrative of the territories, thus offering interactive and immersive experiences. Digital itineraries were created for some selected places containing additional information and insights that can be accessed in real time through the dedicated page on the TCI portal[2].

The last phase of the Nativi project, namely the project's communication phase, regarded the presentation of the Community maps created by the students in the two schools involved. The event, which was attended by the students' parents, by the stakeholders who accompanied the outings and by other classes, was an opportunity for the community to display and describe their own places, perceived as unique worlds, in which the community's whole sense of belonging is represented.

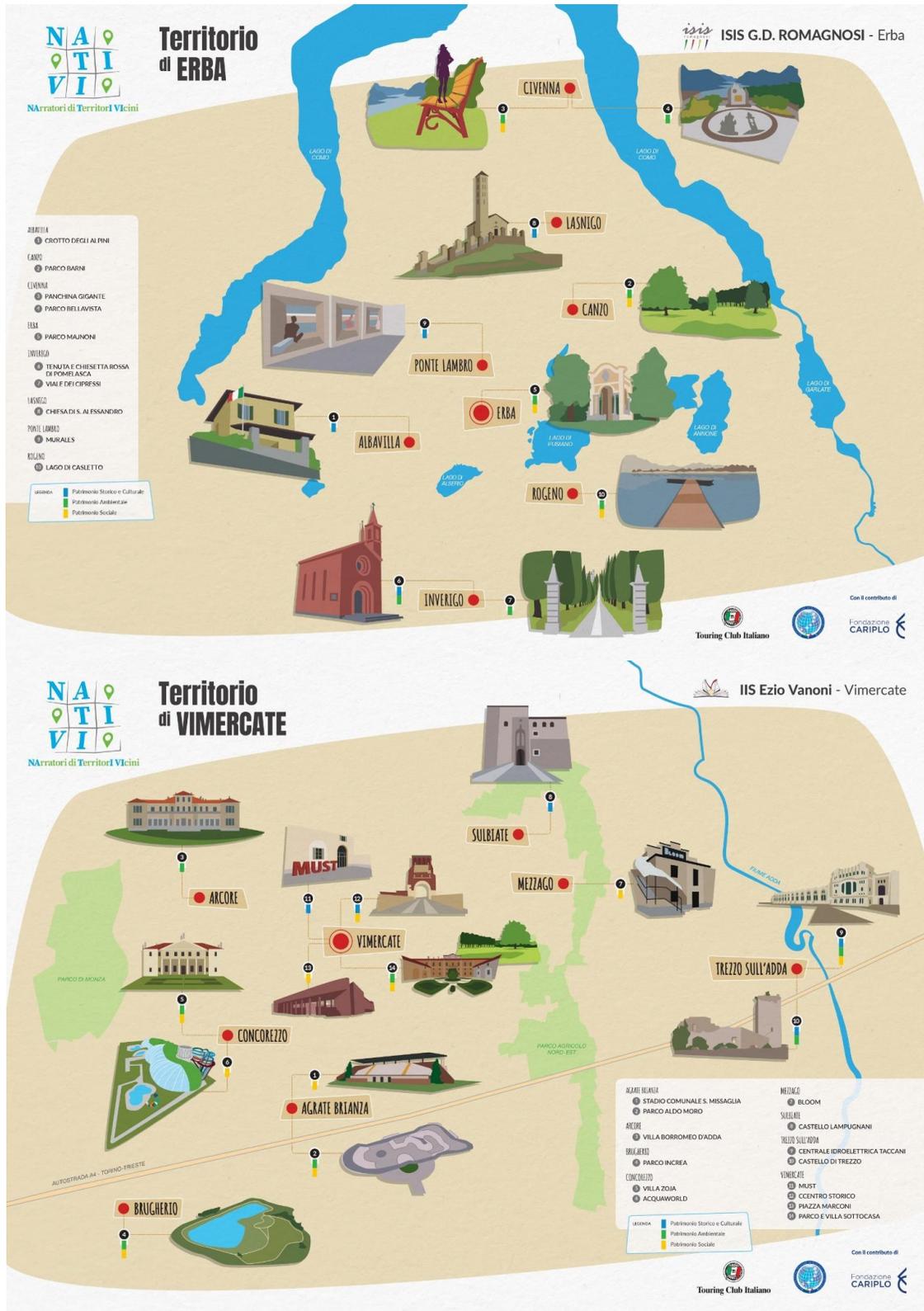[2]   https://www.touringclub.it/news/parte-il-progetto-nativi-con-gli-studenti-per-riscoprire-il-territorio

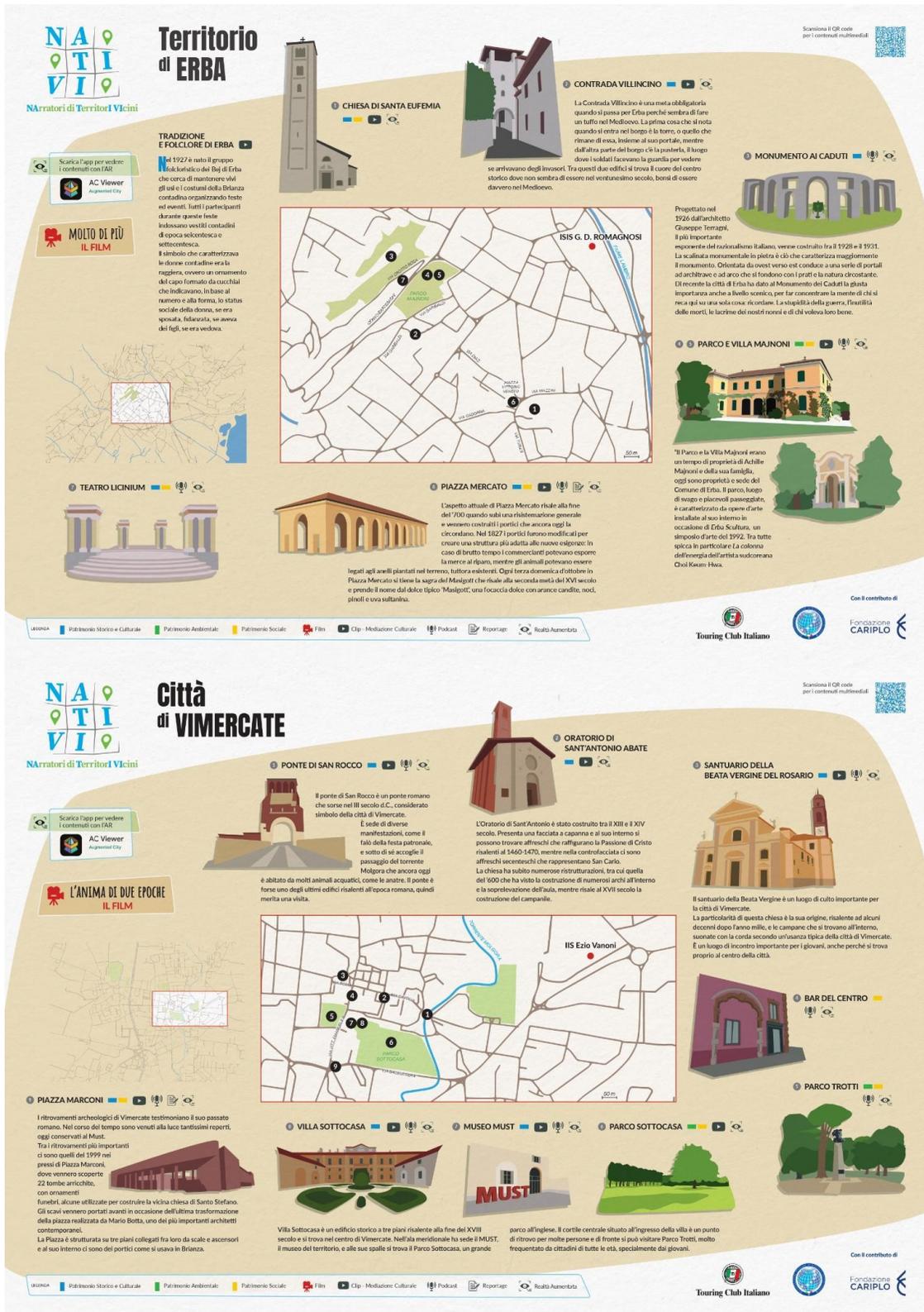Figure 1. Community maps of the territories of Erba and Vimercate, created by the students. Source: Nativi Project.

Figure 2. Community maps of the municipalities of Erba and Vimercate, created by the students. Source: Nativi Project.

5. Inputs for a methodology from Nativi Project: strengths and weaknesses

As previously mentioned, the Nativi project was intended as a pilot project carried out in two schools in order to test a potentially repeatable methodology. On its completion, we may draw some final conclusions on two levels: firstly, by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology itself, so as to understand what had worked and should therefore be retained in desired future replications, and what, instead, proved to be less effective and should be redesigned, rendered more efficient or eliminated; secondly, we may reflect on the Nativi project's potential as a tool in territorial education, and on its ability to strengthen a sense of active citizenship in the students involved.

Looking firstly at the project itself and the methodology tested, we can observe a number of critical issues related to the different stages of the process. First and foremost, with regard to the participation techniques, we observed that not all students were adequately involved, with some passively submitting to the activities presented in the classroom and in the field. Consequently, the positive results we report later cannot be considered valid for all participants, as is often the case when teaching groups as heterogeneous in terms of interests and motivations as those of secondary school classes. In this respect, it is worth highlighting that this critical issue was most evident in Vimercate, where the class had been composed *ex-novo* at the start of the school year; in other words where the project's launch did not encounter an established and cohesive group. Added to this was a second critical logistical issue namely that students in Vimercate came from extremely widespread locations. This meant that not all of the students' home towns could be visited, so that some did not feel fully and emotionally involved.

In light of this pilot initiative, we should highlight the importance of the context in which the project is implemented in order for the results to be satisfactory. Vimercate and Erba proved to be, from this point of view, ideal contexts for conducting a pilot as they differ greatly in relation to the degree of urbanisation within their surroundings. Although both can be considered as part of the Milanese metropolitan area, the former is located close to the city centre, resulting in a greater relationship with the metropolis, whereas Erba is located further away and therefore has a more tenuous relationship with the big city. In both cases, the schools have a wide catchment area, rendering the process of constructing a community map very dispersive, for the simple reason that the community of reference (the class) struggles to locate itself in a shared territory. In view of this experience, the Nativi project is potentially more suited to larger urban contexts, which would presumably include more students from the city in which the school is located.

Conversely, when discussing the technical aspects of the project, a number of critical issues emerged on which we have already reflected in depth ahead of the hoped-for replications. Firstly, the excessive number of hours and phases led to longer times, resulting in a dissipation of energy and making it difficult for the students to grasp the significance of all the activities in which they were involved. Specifically, the main issue was that the participatory process related to the creation of the community map and the storytelling phase took place in two separate and distant periods (first and second semesters, respectively), leading some participants to lose the connection between these activities.

On the other hand, we can point out that, despite the technical shortcomings which are to be expected in an experiment such as Nativi, the project proved to be an effective tool for territorial education. One strength is that, via this methodology, students had the opportunity to interface with the territory in a way that was new to them, and which stimulated them to interpret it in a different way compared to what they had done before. In particular, the scheduling of community mapping activities with a first phase in the classroom and a second in the field proved effective. Specifically, they shifted from a self-centred view based solely on their adolescent outlook, to a broader view derived from active confrontations with adults who operate tangibly in the places they had identified as meaningful for themselves. In some cases, they discovered that places identified as social spaces for their

own community are actually perceived as being in the process of being de-territorialised by local actors.

The most obvious example is Piazza Marconi in Vimercate, which was identified during the classroom phase as one of the most important places with symbolic value for the students. When visiting, they engaged with local actors and discovered that their presence there is perceived as detrimental and disruptive for local business activities. Retailers are forced to take steps to adjust, for example by closing at the times of greatest influx of young people. This experience has led them to realise that they are not the only inhabitants of the territory and that numerous actors with different and potentially conflicting interests also exist. With this knowledge, they embarked on a critical reflection on their role in that public square. Of course, this does not mean that the social problem is solved, but from an educational point of view, no doubt, they developed a competence in active citizenship.

This and other examples suggest that Nativi has helped to sow the early seeds for a desirable change, promoting awareness of the values of the students' lived space and the importance of the heritage in which they are immersed, which comprises not only prestigious cultural assets but also seemingly mundane everyday practices on which individual and collective well-being depends. Through this type of activity, they are encouraged to view themselves as potential agents of change, for the simple (but not obvious) reason that they discover that they are part of a civic and social life. A final example in this respect, involves a visit to the *ARCI* club, located near the school in Vimercate, that none of the students had been aware of. For this reason, it was not included among the locations of reference so that the visit was organised by the facilitators precisely to stimulate a critical interpretation of the realities that characterise their space. The discovery of a vital meeting place of which they had no knowledge further prompted them to question their role, realising that, even in what they consider to be familiar spaces, multiple social practices exist deriving from different ways of life.

To conclude, it is curious to note that none of the 48 students in the classes involved ever cited the school as a place of reference for the community. This fact is interesting in itself, but even more relevant when one considers that a total of around 350 places were listed by the two schools. It could have been an oversight or a result of a miscommunication in the participation phase, however this does not detract from the importance of noting that it could indicate a distance between the students and the school, which they don't seem recognise as a space for socialising, despite the fact that it is objectively the place where all the students involved spend most of their time. The Nativi project's methodology does not allow us to draw exhaustive conclusions in this respect (this is not its goal), but upon completion of this first experience it does at least allow us to point out a possible critical issue and pose an open question that is perhaps worth exploring further.

6. Conclusions

As highlighted so far, the Nativi Project is structured around two main theoretical reference lines. On the basis of the trials described, we can conclude by discussing the results that highlight the link between the adopted methodological choices and the debate on territorial education and participatory methods. From the geographical education perspective (Van der Schee, 2014), as we have seen, territorial education represents a pedagogical outlook whose goal is the promotion, understanding and conscious and active interaction of the population with their geographical and social environment. This approach is based on the idea that learning should always be closely connected to the geographical, cultural and social context in which people live, work and develop their spatial relationships (Giorda, 2011; Dematteis and Giorda, 2013; Giorda and Puttilli, 2019). With this in mind, the Nativi project, in its first trial, students from the two participating classes were included in meetings both in the classroom and in the field, which, besides acting as preparation for the creation of the maps, also played an educational role, enabling the students to reflect and spend their time listening, understanding and reconsidering the places in which they live and which they territorialise, through both individual and shared reflections

on the territory and the collective values it expresses. Indeed, the purpose of territorial education programmes is to help people get to know and to gain a better understanding of the place where they live by fostering intergenerational dialogue.

Finally, from the participatory methodology perspective, the Nativi Project attempted to apply, in schools, certain techniques acquired from the aforementioned participatory cartography experiences (Burini, 2016), in order to build specific community maps capable of restoring not so much the sense of the relationship between the local community in general and the territory, but rather the sense of the relationship between the students themselves and the territory. Thus, the result is not a classic community map, but rather a representation of the sense of belonging that connected the students to the places where they live.

The representation obtained, as we have seen, has a number of weaknesses. However, it can be appreciated if contextualised within the nature of Nativi as a pilot project. From a theoretical point of view, it is especially interesting as an exercise that reveals the reflexive and chorographic nature of the map, which, in this specific case, loses its link with the topographical dimension almost completely, in order to render, in an appealing graphic format, the point of view of those who produced the information that generated it, namely the students. At the end of the process, the reflective nature of the course encourages them to continue to think about themselves and their role in the area in which they live and encouraged them on their journey towards citizenship education on which we intended to lead them.

Acknowledgements

References

1. Barker R., Gower K., "Strategic application of storytelling in organizations: Toward effective communication in a diverse world", *Journal Of Business Communication*, 47, 3, 2010, pp. 295-312.

2. Bassano C., Barile S., Piciocchi P., Spohrer J.C., Iandolo F. and Fisk R., "Storytelling about places: Tourism marketing in the digital age", *Cities*, 87, 2019, pp. 10-20.

3. Berque A., *Ecumene. Introduzione allo studio degli ambienti umani*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2019.

4. Bianchetti A., "Conoscersi, riconoscersi, rappresentarsi: le mappe di comunità", in Banini T. (Ed.), *Identità territoriali. Questioni, metodi ed esperienze a confronto*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2013, pp.76-91.

5. Bonacini E., *Digital Storytelling nel marketing digitale e turistico*, Palermo, Dario Flaccovio Editore, 2021.

6. Burini F., *Cartografia partecipativa. Mapping per la governance ambientale e urbana*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2016.

7. Burini F., "Valorizzare il paesaggio e i sapori locali dei territori montani in chiave smart: sistemi di Mapping e di Storytelling per la promozione turistica sostenibile dell'altopiano di Bossico nel Bergamasco", *Annali del Turismo*, VII, 2018, pp. 141-159.

8. Burini F., "Sistemi partecipativi per la governance territoriale: cartografare i dati prodotti dagli abitanti", in Casti E. (Ed.), *La geografia a Bergamo. Nuove sfide per l'analisi territoriale e il mapping*, Rome, AGeI, 2019, pp 3-17.

9. Casey E., "How to get from space to place in fairly short stretch of time", in Feld S. and Baso K. (Eds.), *Sense of place*, Santa Fe, School of American Research, 1996, pp. 14-51.

10. Casti E., *L'ordine del mondo e la sua rappresentazione. Semiosi cartografica e autoreferenza*, Milan, Unicopli, 1998.

11. Casti E., *Cartografia critica. Dal topos alla chora*, Milan, Guerini, 2013.

12. Clifford S. and King A. (Eds.), *From Place to Place: Maps and Parish Maps*, London, Common Ground, 1996.

13. Clifford S., Maggi M. and Murtas D., *Genius loci. Perché, quando e come realizzare una mappa di comunità*, Turin, Ires Piemonte, 2006.

14. Crampton J., *The political mapping of cyberspace*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University

Press, 2003.

15. Dematteis G. and Giorda C., "Territorial values and geographical education", *J-READING (Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography)*, 1, 2, 2013, pp. 17-32.

16. Demetrio D., *Educare è narrare. Le teorie, le pratiche, la cura*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2012.

17. De Vecchis G., Marta M., Morri R., Pasquinelli d'Allegra D. and Pesaresi C., "Segni e Sogni in Città", *Ambiente Società Territorio – Geografia nelle Scuole*, 5, 2008.

18. De Vecchis G., Pasquinelli D'Allegra D. and Pesaresi C., *Didattica della geografia*, Milan, UTET Università, 2020.

19. Farinelli F., *I segni del mondo. Immagine cartografica e discorso geografico in età moderna*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1992.

20. Farinelli F., *Geografia. Un'introduzione ai modelli del mondo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2003.

21. Farinelli F., *La crisi della ragione cartografica*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009.

22. Giorda C., "Conoscenza geografica e cittadinanza. Un progetto per il territorio", in Giorda C. and Puttilli M. (Eds.)*, Educare al territorio, educare il territorio. Geografia per la formazione*, Rome, Carocci, 2011, pp. 45-54.

23. Giorda C. and Puttilli M., "Presentazione", in Giorda C. and Puttilli M. (Eds.) *Educare al territorio, educare il territorio. Geografia per la formazione*, Rome, Carocci, 2011.

24. Giorda C. and Puttilli M., "Educazione al territorio: una metodologia per la formazione geografica", in Giorda C. and Zanolin G. (Eds.), *Idee geografiche per educare al mondo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli 2019, pp. 19-35.

25. Giorda C. and Rosmo C., "Il ruolo dell'ambiente nell'apprendimento. L'educazione geografica fra neuroscienze, place-based e outdoor education", *Ambiente, società, territorio − Geografia nelle scuole*, 2021, pp. 15-21.

26. Harley J.B., "Deconstructing the Map", *Cartographica*, 26, 2, 1989, pp. 1-20.

27. Heidegger M., "Costruire abitare pensare", in Heidegger M., *Saggi e discorsi*, Milan, Mursia, 1976, pp. 96-108.

28. IGU, *International Charter on Geographical Education*, 2016.

29. Ivona A., Privitera D. and Rinella A., "Memoria, narrazioni e mappe di comunità: l'esperienza dell'Ecomuseo nel Mar Piccolo di Taranto", *Bollettino della Associazione Italiana Di Cartografia*, 173, 2021, pp. 78-91.

30. Jacob C., *L'empire des cartes. Approche théorique de la cartographie à travers de l'histoire*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1992.

31. Leslie K., "Le Parish Maps del West Sussex. Un "modello" per rappresentare l'identità territoriale", in Balletti F. (Ed.), *Sapere tecnico-sapere locale. Conoscenza, identificazione, scenari per il progetto*, Florence, Alinea Editrice, 2007, pp. 191-202.

32. Levy J., *L'invention du monde. Une géographie de la mondialisation*, Paris, Presses de Science Po, 2008.

33. Lussault M., *Iper-luoghi. La nuova geografia della mondializzazione*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019.

34. Madau C., "Le mappe di comunità: esperienze di cartografia partecipata per lo sviluppo locale", *ASITA*, 2015, pp. 541-548.

35. Magnaghi A., *Il territorio dell'abitare*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1998.

36. Magnaghi A., "Auto-rappresentazione verso l'autogoverno: le mappe di comunità", *Contesti: città, territori, progetti. Rivista del Dipartimento di urbanistica e pianificazione del territorio*, 1, 2010, pp. 70-81.

37. Mazza G. and Zanolin G., "La mappa di comunità: uno strumento per educare al territorio e alla cittadinanza", *Ambiente Società Territorio − Geografia nelle scuole*, 1, 2023, pp. 27-19.

38. Molinari P., "Geografia e cittadinanza: rendere consapevole un legame necessario", in Molinari P. and Riva E. (Eds.), *Spazi e tempi della cittadinanza. Idee e percorsi interdisciplinari per la didattica*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2017, pp. 17-29.

39. Morin E., *La testa ben fatta. Riforma dell'insegnamento e riforma del pensiero*, Milan, Raffaello Cortina, 2000.

40. Perkins C., "Community mapping", *The cartographic Journal*, 44, 2, 2007, pp. 127-137.

41. Petrella A., *Mappare la comunità, una proposta teorica e metodologica per il lavoro socio-educativo*, Lecce, Pensa Multi-

Media, 2022.

42. Pickles J., *Ground Truth. The social implycations of Geographic Information Systems*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1995.

43. Pickles J., *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geocoded World*, London, Routledge, 2004.

44. Santos M., *A Natureza do Espaço. Técnica e Tempo. Razão e Emoção*, São Paulo, Hucitec, 1999.

45. Smith, G.A., "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We are", *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 83, 8, 2002, pp. 979-994.

46. Sowden M., "Storytelling or how to make people care for anything", 2012, http://feveredmutterings.com/StorytellingEv erything.pdf.

47. Taylor D.R.F. (Ed.), *Cybercartography: Theory and Practice*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2005.

48. Tuan Y.F., "Place: An Experiential Perspective", *Geographical Review*, 65, 2, 1975, pp. 151-165.

49. Tuan Y.F., "Spazio e luogo, una prospettiva umanista", in Vagaggini V. (Ed.), *Spazio geografico e spazio sociale*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1978, pp. 92-130.

50. Tuan Y.F., *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes and values*, New York, Prentice Hall, 1974.

51. Van Der Schee J., "Looking for an international strategy for geography education", *J-READING (Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography)*, 1, 2014, pp. 9-13.

52. Wood D., *The power of maps*, New York, Guilford Press, 1992.