Toolkit no. 6
Visual Methodologies for Landscape Observatory
Lesson manual and workbook

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Summary

Introduction
to the Visual Methodologies for Landscape Observatory

To train experts in communication through Visual Methodologies for Landscape Observatory, it will be necessary to organize specific workshops, based on experimental processes, coordinated by experts in different sectors, from storytelling to videomaking, from photography to ideogrammatic and iconic drawing.

These laboratories will be open to professionals interested in the tool but also to simple citizens who want to be involved in the development processes of landscape design and transformation. In fact, the representation of the contents relating to the analysis and design of territories poses some specific problems for those who deal with communicating these processes and disseminating them to make landscape knowledge the common heritage of the communities involved.

This involves an important training process for the actors of the landscape representation and its elaborations in the form of a project. The training tends to broaden the actor's personal knowledge and to favor his own, singular, ability to express and communicate his thoughts on such a complex topic like landscape with ease. In fact, as Michael Jacob writes:

> ‘The landscape is not an objective, measurable and existing phenomenon in itself, but rather something that arises by virtue of the action of man and which depends on him. The landscape as reality is the product of a constitution by the subject, that is, of a historical recess of constitution.’ [JACOB, 2017: 9]

And again, on the landscape there is a philosophical literature that links it to its representation in an essential way, thus giving substance to the idea that the landscape project needs a fruitful relationship with the representation of the same:

'It is produced like this that duplicity of the term landscape which is well familiar to the speaker of our language, who knows perfectly well that the word can mean, at the same time, the representation (pictorial or photographic) of a part of the territory, and the territory itself, but not in the its materiality, but rather in the perception we have of it, in its appearance, appearance or form. What the history of the word also tells us is that this second meaning, in addition to being more recent than the first, is also, at least historically and lexically, a consequence of it, in the sense that the idea of the landscape as an aspect or form of a territory arises through the pictorial representation of the landscape and depends on it, if not in principle, at least in fact'. [D'ANGELO, 2014: 17]

In this framework, the training process of professionals called to deal with landscape (and not only them) is divided into two different areas, distinct from each other but evidently related. The first of concerns the **storytelling of the projects**, understood as a truly **dynamic narrative**, with videos, sketches, animated drawings, etc. to tell the greatest number of users about the characteristics of the designers chosen, overcoming the difficulties of the common project. The second concerns the possibility of **encouraging the participation of the community** in the analysis phase as well as in the development phase of landscape planning, building a system of direct relationships between the options on the choices and the will of the citizens, through effective graphic devices such as summary diagrams, pictograms, mind maps, etc.
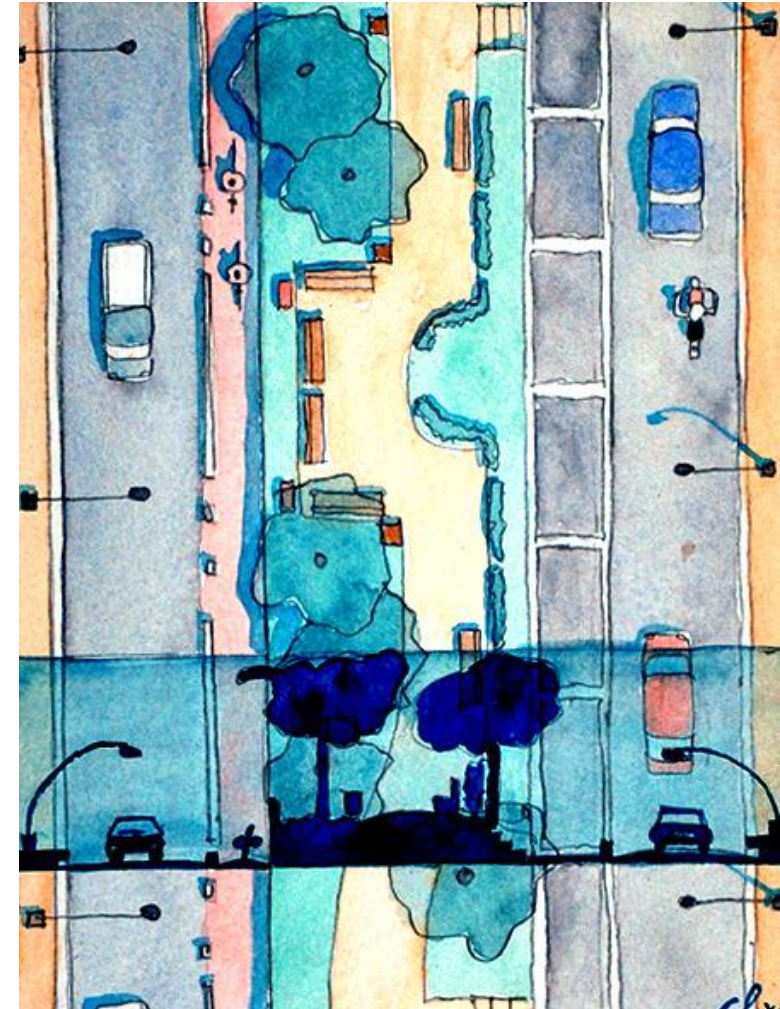
Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Intro

'Barthes maintains that painting and drawing are based on an «organization of the scene, on a transformation of the object». While in the photo there is only reduction of the object, not transformation. Photography - Barthes continues - is a message without code, while drawing is a codified message. Just think of the painting of the fourteenth century "primitives", the meanings they gave to everything represented in the painting (one example among all: the patron saint carrying the city in his arms, an attitude that indicated the power that kept it subservient throws). Ultimately, painting and drawing require an "apprenticeship", while the photographer can at most choose the subject, framing, angle, etc., even if with the automatisms in use today the margins for initiative and apprenticeship (the technical one obviously does not confuse with that of the rendering of meanings) are very narrow compared to the past. In photography the relationship between meanings and signifiers is not one of transformation, but of recording, and this has led to the mythologizing of the photo as a "natural" copy of reality. As an analogue image, in photography we believe that we see the thing itself represented, as the same artists of past centuries believed with their paintings, who recognized themselves in Kepler's strong, lapidary axiom ut pictura ita visio, that is, seeing as synonymous with representing and vice versa.' [TURRI, 2004: 55]

Let's see what the elements of representation are and drawing that can favor this ability to transform reality by prefiguring it and what the apprenticeship necessary for this practice is.
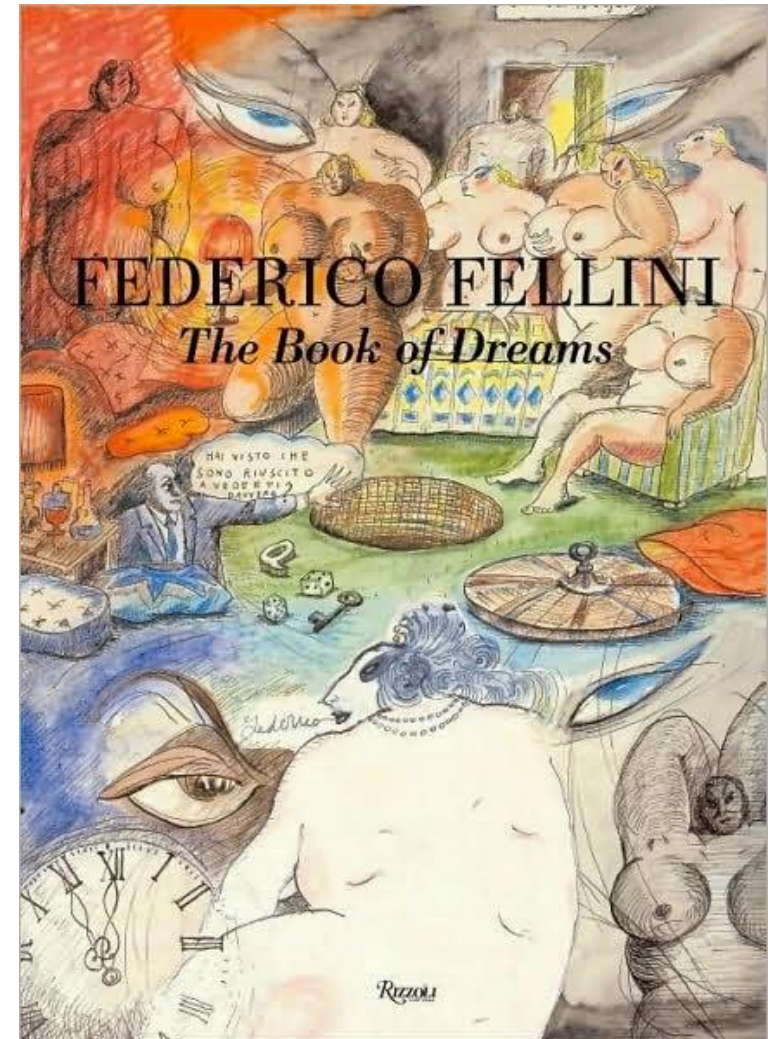
Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 1_The 'dream'

In general, one of the main difficulties in outlining and describing a project on an urban and territorial scale consists in transporting the detailed choices on paper, at often very large scales, into the imagination of a non-expert user. The urban planning project often has solipsistic connotations of communication, in which the canonical tools of representation work towards the understanding of processes by professionals, excluding other potential interlocutors.

The lack of understanding of the "maps" for non-experts; just as the difficulty of describing analyzes and projects in complex areas on a territorial level has made it necessary to overcome this classic representation. Thus, is needed to introduce impactful, understandable, friendly graphic solutions which draw their strength from the gestures of the drawings, in their approachability, and in the open dialogue between conventional and non-conventional drawings. The main expedient in this sense is that of the "dream" sketch, the drawing of the dream of the project.

During his long career as a film director Federico Fellini had the habit of keeping a notepad on his bedside table on which to jot down dreamed visions and emotions as soon as he woke up. Thus, was born Fellini's wonderful "Book of Dreams", which contains around 400 pages of drawn notes and sketches. These illustrations which, as Tullio Kezich says, are: *'a proposal to circumnavigate the Mystery, an endless warehouse of finds, surreal hypotheses, unrealizable fantasies, precognitions.'* Here it is precisely on this last word, precognitions, that the meaning of the "dream" sketch is configured, on an evoked idea, on a formal solution that comes from the imagination, but which defines the iconic range to be shown to users to tell that type of figuration the designer hypothesizes for the future landscape.

Lesson 1_Project storytelling
**Step 1_The 'dream'**
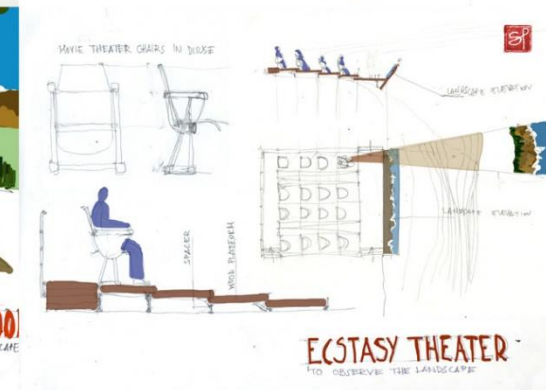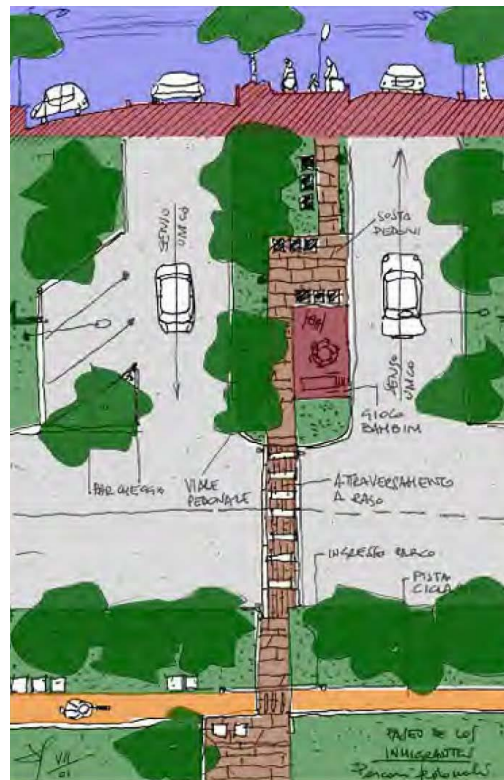
Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 2_The multitasking view

First Google Earth and then Maps have reconverted our idea of a map to that of an interactive cartography, to a planimetric representation in which there is an overflowing presence of information and media that overlap, giving rise to a very high level of rich information complexity. It is necessary to work on this model to convey the complexity of the designers' choices and bring them closer to the sensitivity of the average client, of the citizen who wants to know at the same time what happens on the plan and in the 3D dimension of his territory, of his life.

Cartographies can and must contain a lot of information "within reach" of the user, not complex and jargony, but easy to access even if numerous. Cartographies can become lists and be enriched with photographs, drawings, diagrams. This would define the complexity of a landscape geography without complicating the level of enjoyment of the non-expert interlocutor and transgressing, where necessary, even the strict rules of the single scale, of unique reference system. In the same cartography, two-dimensional and three-dimensional drawings, jumps in scale, texts and illustrations must coexist in a common effort to make the territory clearer and more easily understandable through its different connotations. Furthermore, this already happens very simply in some tourist maps which help to orient oneself with the aid of specific enlargements of monuments useful for territorial reference.
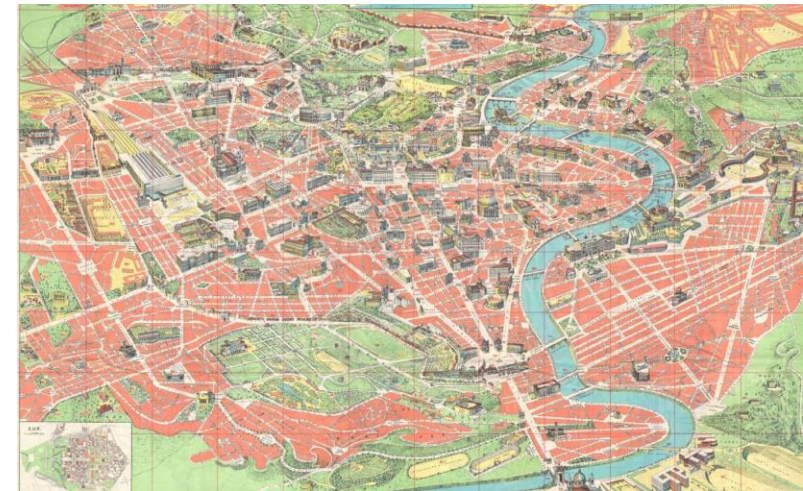
Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 2_The multitasking view

Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 3_Clarity and synthesis

Unlike multitasking designs, sometimes the complexity of the issues to be addressed in the design process makes it necessary to undergo a process of synthesis and concentration on some specific issues. Thus, transforming communication from a communication that tends to be exhaustive, into a partial but in-depth one, a focus on a theme to isolate.

Synthetic representation first isolates forms, iconizes them and works on the analysis of this icon to develop graphic articulations necessary to clarify a given, regardless of what exists above, around, at the same time.

A project can also be represented, for greater understanding, especially if in relation to a target of non-experts, as an abacus of themes, as a series of elements related to each other, but treated with indications and choices specifications. This, on the one hand, makes the individual themes and individual problems more understandable. It also reveals to the user the complexity of the design process, as **multiple actions between factors that influence each other** and on which the designer's choices, they arise as interrelated processes.

This type of representation tends to make the theme iconic. To work on this with a formal reduction that often reaches abstraction, favoring, in this extreme drying up of issues that are not strictly pertinent, an in-depth and very zoomed-in reflection. The shape of the single theme to be developed becomes the ideogram of a specific stage within the design process.

Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 3_Clarity and synthesis
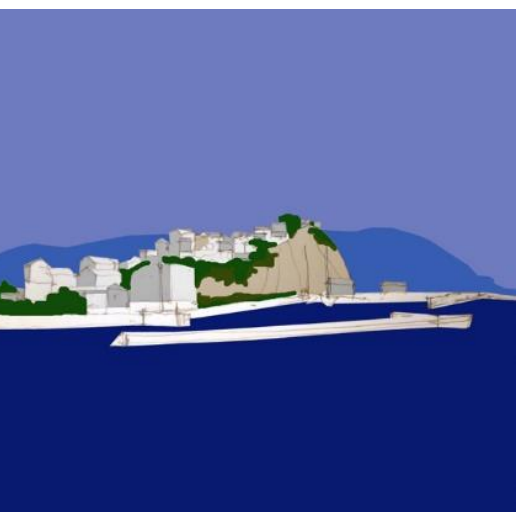
Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 4_The photomontage

Photomontage is a practice traditionally performed in design for a very long time. In essence it is a question of increasing the comprehensibility of some design choices through the placement of these choices in one or more photographs. Thus, giving the impression of the view of the landscape at the conclusion of the process that the project wants to trigger.

This practice certainly makes the communication of the project more friendly towards citizens and non-specialist users of the sector. But it obviously freezes the process in a single and predetermined view which has little to do with the real impact of a project on the landscape that it involves.

The use that can be made of photomontage during the development phase of the project is different. That is, not to use this photomontage to represent an outcome, but to mature it, experimenting directly on the used (original) photograph with different options, changing the choices and clarifying the consequences of these in a clear and plastic way.

This way of sketching in photomontage is very useful in making the approach to the themes comprehensible and direct for non-expert users. It is a way of developing reflection on the project that is communicative and capable of sparking prolific discussions in the act of planning.

Lesson 1_Project storytelling
Step 4_The photomontage

Workbook 1_Project storytelling

After the lesson on the Project storytelling and it's four (4) steps, complete the following:

Task 1_The Dream
_What is the 'dream' of the research / project / interest, the intuitive origin of the topic, the impression of the, the vision of the result?
_Present the 'dream' by a sketch, collage, and/or diagram. Name the 'dream' and describe it with a summary, poem, and/or a list of keywords / associations.

Task 2_The Multitasking View
_What are intuitive ideas, knowings, and multilayer views that develop from the 'dream' and represent the incentive of the research / project / interest?
_Create a landscape cartography of your research area using open source digital map and complement it with intuitive elements that form the research / project / interest.

Task 3_Clarity and synthesis
_What are landscape identity factors most important for the research / project / interest? Both real and representative, both spatial, social, and symbolic, both natural, anthropogenic, and perceptual?
_Synthesise the landscape identity factors as the list(s), table(s), and/or diagram(s). Supplement the synthesis by graphical illustrations.

Task 4_The Photomontage
_What is the research / project / interest hypothesis and/or aim(s)?
_Experiment by drawing and sketching over photograph(s) and/or photomontage the variants and different options in addressing the hypothesis and/or in achieving the aim(s).

Lesson 2_The dynamic tell
Intro

The landscape is a complex and multifaceted entity, the description of which, in general, is difficult to delegate to a single image, to a single ecstatic transcription in the form of a drawing or sketch. As Michael Jacobs writes:

'The landscape is both visible and invisible, it reveals itself and hides itself. It is fundamentally dual, and this not only taking into account the discordant characterizations that different and competing disciplines give it: it is dual in itself. The way of being of the landscape, located on the border between subjectivity and objectivity, freedom, and necessity, is similar to that of the work of art.' [JACOB, 2017: 7]

In this sense, the description, even subjective and authorial, of a landscape that occurs with a dynamic narration tool, such as a video or an animated drawing, reveals a greater ability to be within the many facets that must be narrated. Dynamism can be a very important key to understanding a complex landscape.

The same goes for the story of the landscape transformation project. The change of a territory or landscape that a project prefigures and outlines is usually long processes over time and which conform through progressive evolution.

The change, prefigured by a project, is normally narrated through papers and documents that identify a departure and an arrival of the new structure, presenting a state of fact and the new terminal structure. But the processes, as mentioned, are long and complex and in this sense, it is sometimes necessary to tell or document them through dynamic stories that introduce the fear factor as an important and clear element.

As Marco Balzano writes, regarding the artist, but it can also say about the designer of the transformation of the landscape:

> *'His task is to identify those only elements that will be saved from oblivion, bring them back into the present and project them into the future: "passing on" means precisely making this crossing.'* [BALZANO, 2019: 35-36]
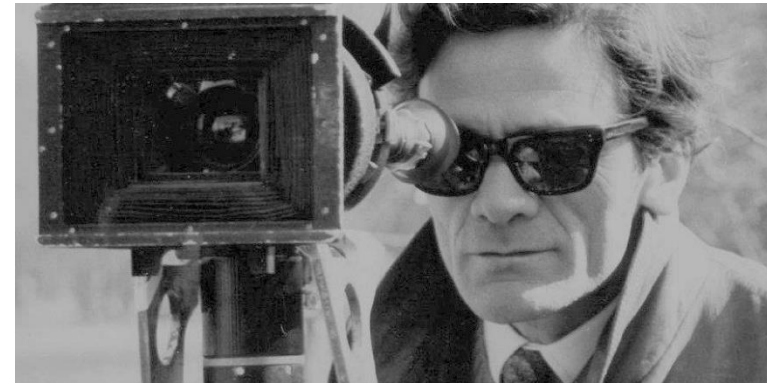
Lesson 2_The dynamic tell
Step 1_Cartoons

The animated drawing refers to masterpieces of animated cinema from Luzzati to Mattotti, from Disney to Hanna and Barbera, from Warner Boss to Studio Ghibli. These illustrious examples can simply act as a guide and example for much simpler products, especially in terms of animation. But for a non-specialist audience, these examples are very effective in terms of narration, of the transformation that a project can implement on a landscape, and above all, the progressive development of this transformation.

Describing the proposed changes on a cartography, with a very direct and very comprehensible freehand drawing, advancing the project step by step. Subsequently, by editing these passages, for example in fading, constitutes a very open way to understanding the transformation that is being hypothesized. This type of representation reaches users involved in the planning process directly and with great punctuality.

The same operation can and must be done on three-dimensional representation systems. The photomontages we were talking about previously, as well as the dream visions themselves, can be organized in stages that replicate the starting image. A certain attention of the observers is provoked by modifying the structure of the starting image through a suitable number of intermediate steps. Thus, the observers are made aware, not only of the outcome but, above all, of the transformation process.

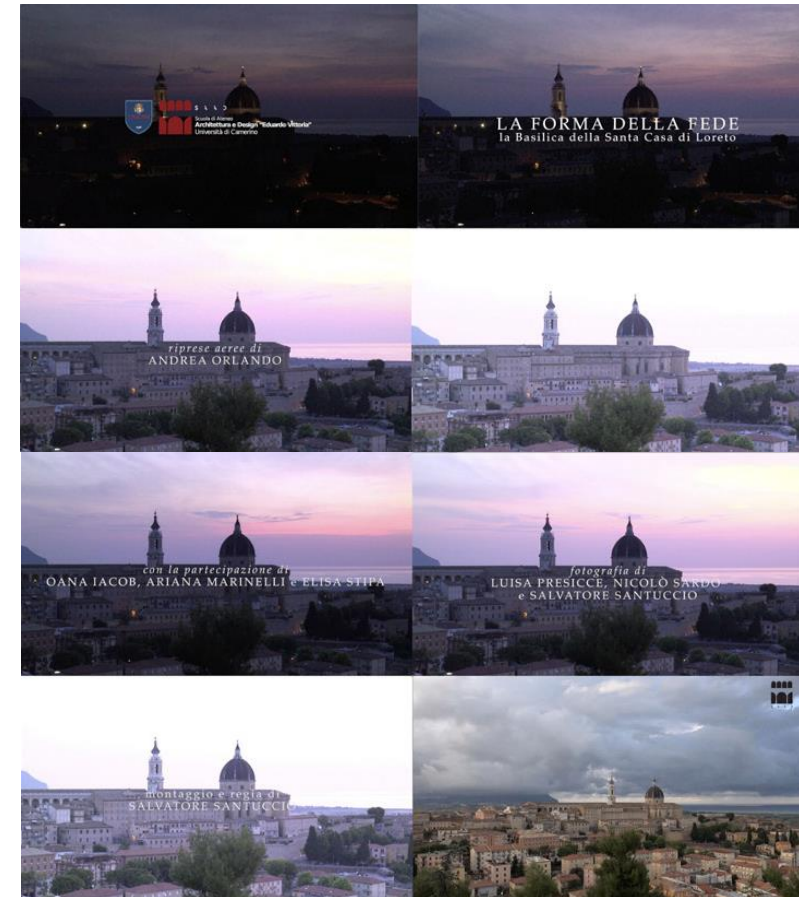**Lesson 2_The dynamic tell**
Step 1_Cartoons
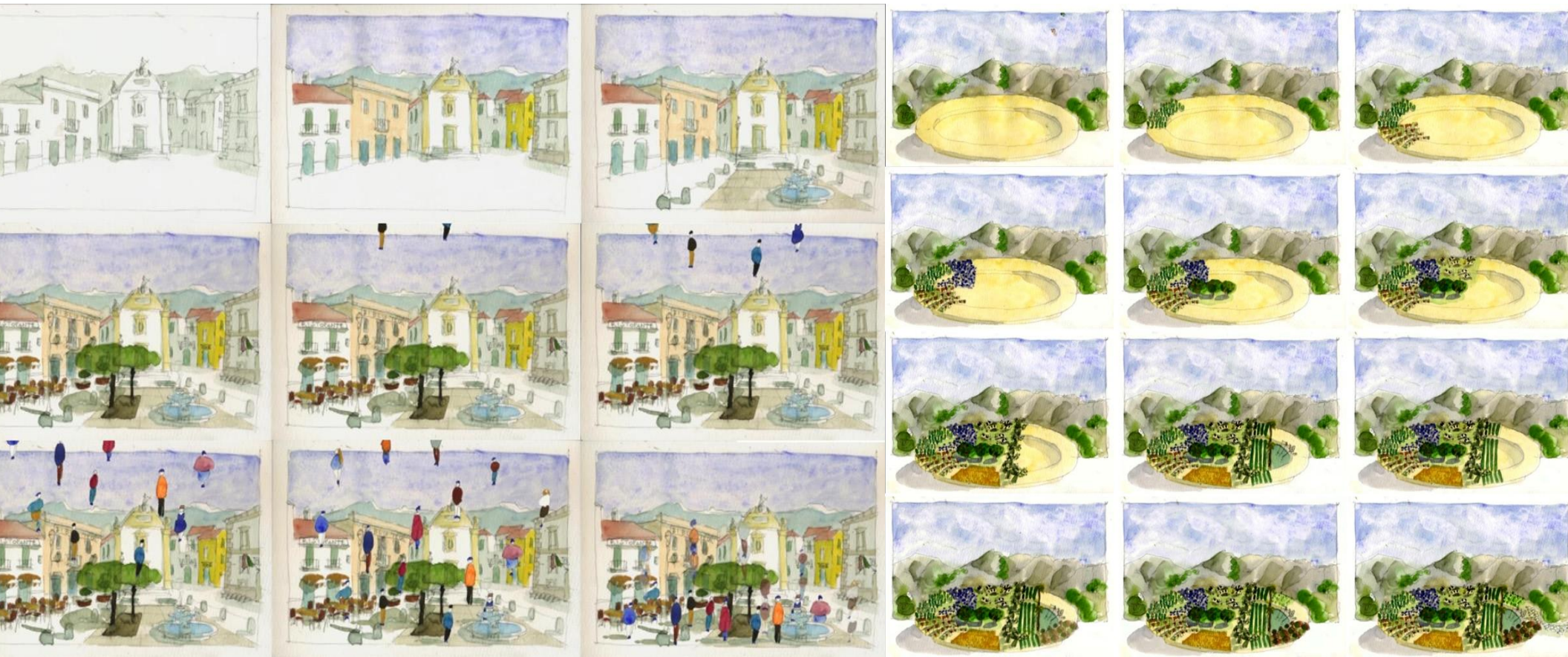
Lesson 2_The dynamic tell
Step 2_Documentary

The documentary is never neutral, on the contrary it is always factious and biased. The narration of a territory or a landscape through the documentary is influenced by the authorial hand of the director at least as much as the design of the landscape is linked to its author. In his directing lessons the great Eisenštein says:

> *'This process of creating the place and the environment of action must be twofold: what you establish in principle in the scheme of the scenography will in a certain sense also determine the subsequent scenic action and its compositional nature, but in turn the action will determine the shape of the scenography and in some cases will strongly modify its original appearance.'* [EISENŠTEIN, 1964: 50-51]

Therefore, when filming a territory, it is necessary to define in advance what impression you want to give to the user of the image and what type of emotion to arouse. This is even more interesting if the documentary serves to prefigure some design choices, which are perhaps narrated textually, but which in the moving image can be suggested to the observer with targeted and biased shots. The narration of the fact that the transformation of a landscape is a dynamic and not static process, in the case of the filmed documentary, is relevant and the images, if well organised, can help to follow the steps of the transformation.

Lesson 2_The dynamic tell
Step 3_The movie story

Cinema constitutes an enormous reservoir of memory of the landscape and a large reserve of testimony to the transformations that it has undergone. As Benjamin says:

> 'The "memory" is the secularized relic. The "memory" is complementary to the "lived experience". The growing self-estrangement of man is deposited in it, cataloging his past as a dead possession. In the nineteenth century, allegory cleared away the external world to establish itself in the internal one.' [BENJAMIN, 1995: 21]

In this sense the memory that cinema offers, meaning cinema in general, even the so-called "B series", is that of places that the camera has crossed, freezing them at the time of the film itself. Those cinematic memories can be investigated and interrogated by people who study the transformations of a landscape in a fruitful and very useful way.

There are now real databases on film locations, easy to access and tracing the transformations of a place through its filmic chronology is a simple and effective process. The architectural development of the Roman suburbs, and the landscape transformations from rural to urban between the 50s and 60s, is all documented in an abundant and timely manner by the Italian cinematography of those years. There we see the transformation of the narrated places developed from films, while they are crossed by Bergman, De Sica, Magnani or Pasolini.

Workbook 2_The dynamic tell

After the lesson on The dynamic tell and it's three (3) steps, complete the following:

Task 1_Cartoons
_Think about the possibilities of applying the animated illustrations and/or staged replications of the starting image as a representation system for the desired landscape transformation. What animated film would you introduce as an example relevant for the topic?
_Propose a cartoon / image transformation sequence for representing the development of the research / project / interest.

Task 2_Documentary
_Think about the possibilities to use documentary in the research / project / interest. What impressions and emotions, what response would you want to arise in the user / spectator of the documentary about territory and landscape?
_Write down clearly the wanted response (impressions and emotions) of spectator. In this perspective, which landscape transformations, research outputs and/or design choices would you want to suggest and narrate to the observer?

Task 3_The Movie Story
_Explore cinematic memories of the research / project / interest within the film databases and chronology. Which films best represent landscape transformations that are relevant for the topic?
_Make a database - list, table, and/or diagram of cinematic memories, opened topics, and filming locations relevant for the research / project / interest.
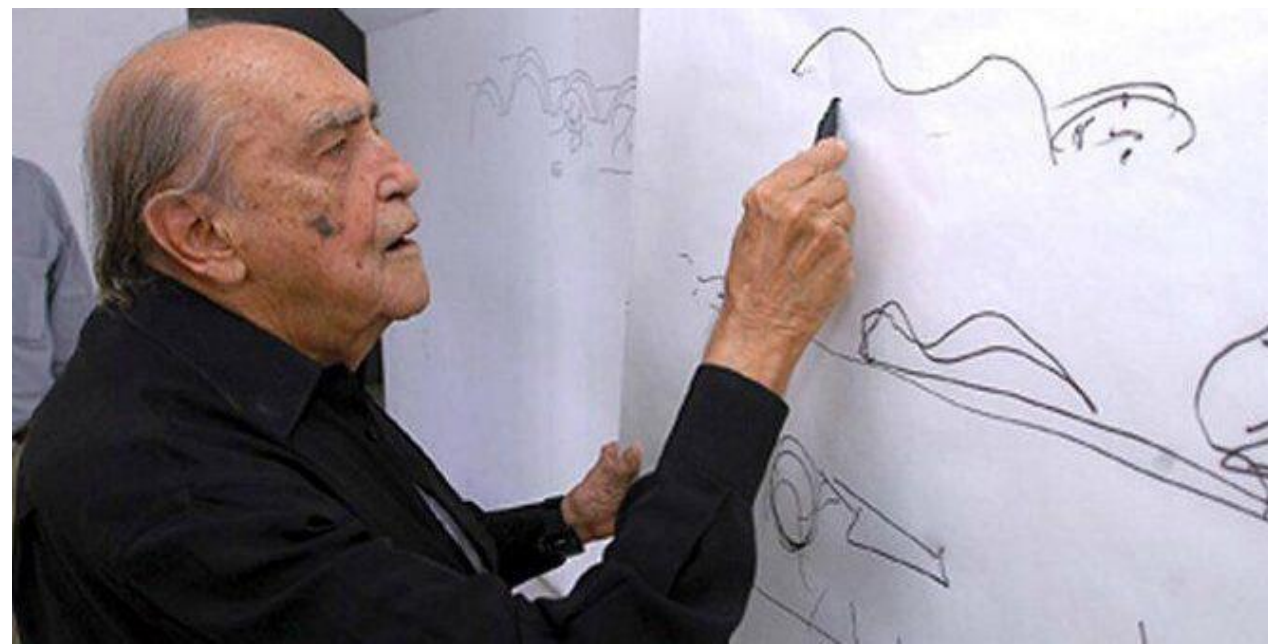
Lesson 3_How to collaborat with community
Intro

So far, the covered topics relate to the narration of a project in a friendly way for non-specialists. The examined graphic devices are to mitigate the difficulty of understanding projects produced by the canonical presentation, particularly in the planning of the complex landscape modifications.

Within this lesson, the aim is to identify useful themes for dialogue with community, citizens, and associations, in other words the primary recipients of the project transformations. Thus, involving them in a process of effective participation in the project, putting themselves in the position to make choices, and develop synthesis processes.

To do this, it is essentially necessary to question users with simple and direct questions, freeing the field from complex conceptual elaborations, but rather hypothesizing contrasting scenarios and asking do you prefer this or that? This practice will determine a panorama of the population's wishes to be considered and which will facilitate the work of defining new landscape structures.

Lesson 3_How to collaborat with community
Step 1_Learning from children

There is no need to be afraid of letting people who are not educated on the topic express themselves through drawing. It will (perhaps) be more complex to decode their message, but it will certainly be useful to understand the requests and desires that the individual citizen will have developed with respect to a landscape (re)design project. Children's drawings, in this sense, come to us with its extraordinary characteristics. As John Locke says:

> *'Children (on the contrary to men themselves) work for the most part according to examples. We are after all the chameleon species, which always takes the color of the things close to it. This should this be surprising in children, who understand better what they see than what they hear.'* [LOCKE, 1946: 78]

It is in the graphic process that children carry out the purest creative genesis, and for this reason it is worth quoting Gianni Rodari when he says:

> *'One day, in the Fragments of Novalis (1772-1801), I found what says: «If we also had a Fantastic, like a Logic, the art of inventing would be discovered.'* [RODARI, 1997: 11]

The children's drawing is deconstructed from the main codes, it is free from orthogonal projections and perspective and axonometric rules. But, above all, it is free from the temporal block that the canonical drawing produces, representing an object or an event in that moment and in that time. Children's drawing tells of movements, often even distant ones, it is storytelling, it is multitasking, and it defines events in a dry and concise graphic formula. They summarize in short, the characteristics of the processes described so far to facilitate the understanding of the projects.

Questioning citizens, even stimulating them to make small drawn diagrams, can constitute the beginning of development in terms of completely unknown imagination and creativity.
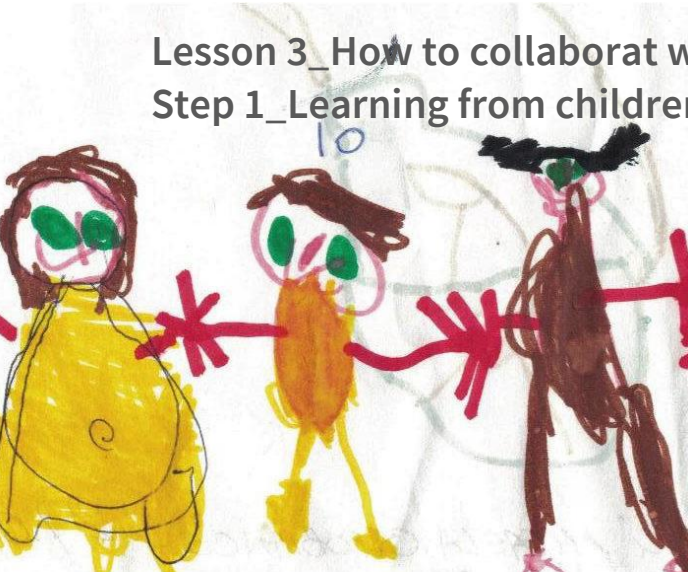
## Lesson 3_How to collaborat with community
Step 2_Colors and symbols

In involving community into project choices, we often operate through dualisms, through contrasting hypotheses, with respect to which citizens must be able to choose directly and easily. Using color to indicate these choices is a very common practice.

The focus of the writings and theories about colors are the works of Manlio Brusatin and Michel Pastoreau, whose definitions seem very pertinent due to the psychological relationship that colors involve. Brusatin tells us about the main dualism in color:

> *'Visual perception appears centered on two fundamental colors and seems to obey a double brain: red and blue with intuitive and schematic associations of centrifugal action of red and centripetal reaction of blue […] and this unconsciously recalls an originally symbolic opposition of the masculine and uranic color (blue) compared to the feminine and chthonic color (red).'* [BRUSATIN (1983) page 8].

Pastoreau, on the other hand, gives an interesting anthropological and cultural reading of each of the main colors:

> *'First of all, that sober blue, favored by our contemporaries because it knows how to make everyone like it. Then the proud red, thirsty for power, who rules blood and fire, virtue and sin. Here is the virginal white, that of angels and ghosts, of abstention and of our sleepless nights. Then the yellow of the wheat, a beautiful complex, uncomfortable in his shoes (he must be excused: for a long time, he was marked by the stigma). Then comes the green, in turn infamous, treacherous, and cunning, king of chance and unfaithful loves. Finally, the sumptuous black man, double agent, humble in his austerity, arrogant in his elegance...'* [PASTOREAU, 2019: 7]
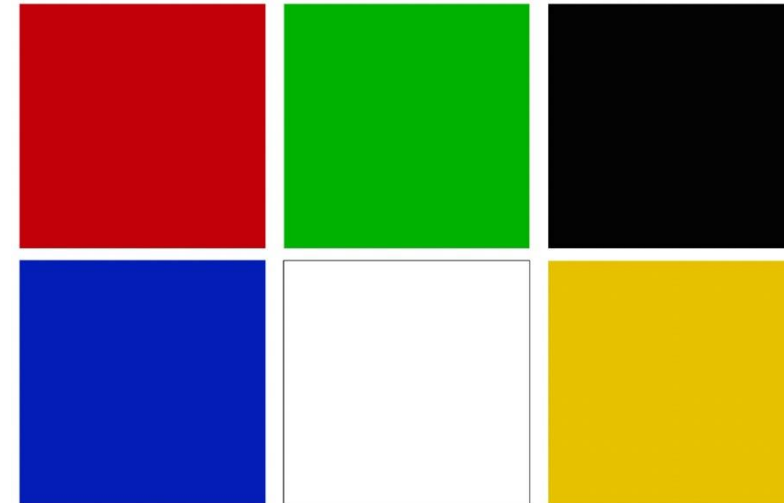
Many procedures can be hidden in the contrast of colors to understand the will of the users with respect to the project choices. Also, a very widespread practice is that of the iconic symbol, the emoticon, to collect positive and negative impressions on the individual choices of the designers, in this case also describable in a textual, theoretical way.

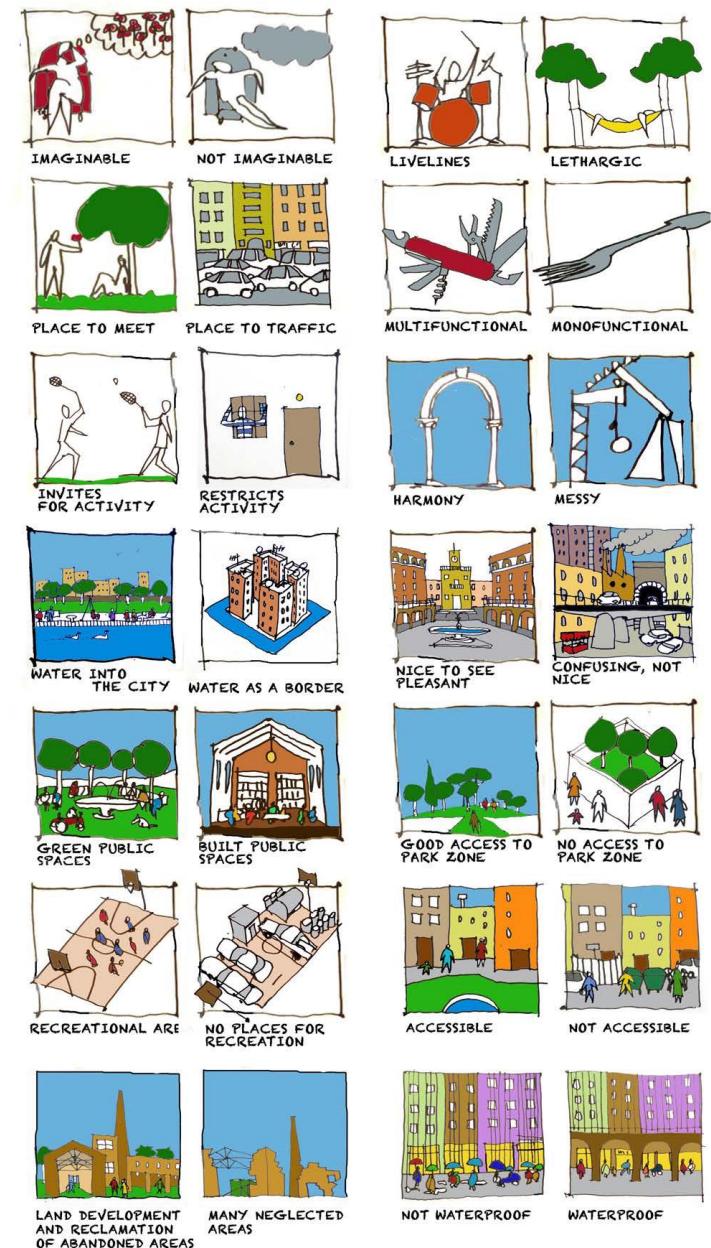## Lesson 3_How to collaborat with community
Step 3_The pictograms

It is well known that the most understood language in the world is pictogram. In any airport in the world you are, where the most arcane and incomprehensible language is spoken, you are able to understand where the toilets, baggage claim or passport control are, thanks to tiny drawings in the form of symbols that graphically indicate these places.

Within European Horizon research entitled Smart-U-Green, a system of representation was experimented that favored participation and the involvement of communities in the management and design choices of different territories in different European contexts [SMART-U-GREEN (2023)]. The resources of the pictogram were used with the aim of investigating the processes of Governing conflicting perspectives on transformations in the urban rural continuum. The research clearly posed some problems on which to intervene:

–   How to explain it with methods understandable to a non-specialist target?
–   How to facilitate interactions among scientists, decision-makers, and citizens?

Through the study of symbols, the attempt was to experiment with creativity, trying to meet the different needs of the population, technical and administrative, and making balanced communication possible on the different targets. A further complication in this case was also that the target of this investigation referred to geographically distant communities with different languages. The theme was to activate an evaluation system based on indicators referring to three main aspects of the quality of the landscape and the quality of life: "Distinguished and pleasant", "Efficient and pleasant" and "Clean and healthy". These were articulated by a series of binary "constructs" through which the impressions and judgments of communities were probed and made into approachable data for specialists and politicians. The graphic definition of these constructs and their easy understanding have become a master path in the use of a simple and effective symbol to make users' choice understandable and direct.

SMART_U_GREEN CONSTRUCT

IMAGINABLE — NOT IMAGINABLE — LIVELINES — LETHARGIC
PLACE TO MEET — PLACE TO TRAFFIC — MULTIFUNCTIONAL — MONOFUNCTIONAL
INVITES FOR ACTIVITY — RESTRICTS ACTIVITY — HARMONY — MESSY
WATER INTO THE CITY — WATER AS A BORDER — NICE TO SEE PLEASANT — CONFUSING, NOT NICE
GREEN PUBLIC SPACES — BUILT PUBLIC SPACES — GOOD ACCESS TO PARK ZONE — NO ACCESS TO PARK ZONE
RECREATIONAL ARE — NO PLACES FOR RECREATION — ACCESSIBLE — NOT ACCESSIBLE
LAND DEVELOPMENT AND RECLAMATION OF ABANDONED AREAS — MANY NEGLECTED AREAS — NOT WATERPROOF — WATERPROOF

Workbook 3_How to collaborat with community

After the lesson on How to collaborate with community and it's three (3) steps, complete the following tasks:

Task 1_Learning from children
_Which topics and/or assignments would you want to present and/or work with the non-experts to gain their views and understandings of the research / project / interest?
_Create a short list of most important topics to present and/or work with the non-experts (use and synthesise the network of landscape transformations, research outputs and/or design choices, from the Lesson 2_Task 2, you want to suggest and narrate to the observer).

Task 2_Colors and symbols
_Think about dualisms and contrasting hypotheses that work best in the community involvement into project choices. Use the short list of most important topics for presenting and/or working with the non-experts from Lesson 3_Task 1 to determine the contrasting hypotheses / choices from which citizens must be able to choose directly and easily.
_What colors would best represent those contrasting hypotheses / choices? Show it.

Task 3_The pictograms
_Once again, use the determine contrasting hypotheses / choices from which citizens must be able to choose directly and easily (from Lesson 3_Task 2). If applicable, also use the short list of most important topics for presenting and/or working with the non-experts (from Lesson 3_Task 1).
_Which pictograms would best represent those contrasting hypotheses / choices and/or most important topics? Show them.

Visual Methodologies for Landscape Observatory
Final assignment of the training course

Assignment 1_Relevant stakeholders
_Set three to five (3-5) groups of relevant stakeholders for the proposed research / project / interest.

Final assignment_Propose survey using visual methodologies
_Prepare the survey using results of visual methodologies from tasks in Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 to create the introduction as well as from the tasks in Lesson 3 to create the survey body.
_Execute the survey to explore how the representatives of relevant stakeholders (use opportunity with your colleagues, friends, relatives, and/or their children) as non-experts view and understand the proposed research / project / interest.
_Use the survey results to enhance the proposed research / project / interest.

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