2022

To Witness, To Practise, To Recognise: We see water system

Carrino, Veneranda, Spera, Federica and Capoccia, Giovanni

To Witness, To Practise, To Recognise: We See Water System

Veneranda Carrino, Federica Spera, and Giovanni Capoccia

ISIA Roma Design,[1] Design dei Sistemi (Systemic Design)

'From Bernini Relational Journey for Water'—hypothesis for a meaningful systemic vision of cultural and environmental heritage'

The goal of this concept research "From Bernini Relational Journey for Water – hypothesis for a meaningful systemic vision of cultural and environmental heritage" is to enhance works of art made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini for Piazza Navona, Piazza di Spagna and Piazza Barberini in the city of Rome (Italy) with a peculiar vision of care and knowledge for the water entity.

This design proposal hopes to create a link and a dialogue between two dimensions: the artistic works, represented by Bernini's fountains inside the architectonic spaces of these plazas on one side, and the dimension of common good environmental heritage of the element water that lives inside the shapes and art of the Bernini's fountains.

This design scenario is a macro design system that has been developed with first-year Master's students in Systemic Design.

Keywords: systemic design, complexity strategy, digital cultural heritage, water

RSD: Methods & Methodology, Society & Culture, Socioecological Design.

---

[1] https://www.isiaroma.it

Presentation summary

Our hypothesis is a meaningful systemic vision of cultural and environmental heritage.

The goal of the concept "From Bernini relational journey for Water: Hypothesis for a meaningful systemic vision of cultural and environmental heritage" is to enhance works of art made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini for Piazza Navona, di Spagna and Barberini in the city of Rome with a vision of care and knowledge for the water entity:

- *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (1648-51) in Piazza Navona
- *Fontana della Barcaccia* (1626–29) in Piazza di Spagna
- *Fontana del Tritone* (1642–43) in Piazza Barberini

This design proposal creates a link and a dialogue between two dimensions: the artistic works, represented by Bernini's fountains inside the architectonic spaces of these plazas on one side, and the dimension of common good environmental heritage of the element water that lives inside the shapes and art of the Bernini's fountains.

This design scenario is a macro design system that has a precise worth-wise objective: there is no future without water. This value is represented inside the design proposal from two statements: water is Life … inside cultural and environmental heritage; water is life … in equality/ in health / in nature (UN Water SDG).

Bernini's fountains are peculiar testimonials of this vision because the artist wants to celebrate the water entity by sculpting it. Water is considered a design element, and as with marble, it assumes a form, completing the structure and the narrative sense in these works of art. Nowadays, the water inside these fountains takes the role of "Magister" as an archetype for a social ethic that wants to re-discover a profound civil living starting from the respect of the form of diversity and otherness that are part of the micro and macro dimension of the water entity. By defining itself as a "friend and protector of the water" (Montanari, 2014; 2016), Bernini allows us to create in the aesthetic dimension an engagement of the user in an active dimension that moves from enchantment to thoughtful action.

The narrative dimension in the three monumental fountains is created by dynamic compositions full of signs whose sense may be direct but, more often, is a symbol for more complex value connotation. This fertile seduction activates a continuous questioning about the deep meaning of the narrative dimension proposed (Bruner, 2003).

This new vision is based on a dialectic between marble and water that moves the conscience to the awareness of the possibility of change starting from the act of looking that can't be a mechanical action, but it has to be deeply relational (Morin, 2018).

Narrative scenario: macro-values objectives in the system

Each place in our macro-system is described through a manifesto of values that identifies the peculiar ways that the specific project of the relational paths must articulate. The values (qualities and actions) conceived as systemic interactions denote the macro-system as vital in its relational paths. They are summarised by three macro-objectives inherent to water:

- **Testifying** the principle of equality
- **Practicing** the health principles
- **Recognising** the nature of the water body and defending it in its otherness of biodiversity and ecosystem

Three relational paths depart from each of Bernini's fountains to highlight the specific identity of the site, and the three variations that refer to water are equality, health, and nature.

> Bernini viewed water as *powerful divinity beyond the human* | as a warning of **equity** to be witnessed | as an element of **health** -for well-being practices, | as a memento of **nature** yet to be recognised.

Water's three relational paths are digital content, which assumes a specific grammar of forms, to display and organise the interactions with the public (quality of space dimension quality of narrative theme).

As a result of analysis related to each sculptural complex and based on the geometry of the sculptural group and on its compositional logic, we propose a specific identity for the relational path content to connect deeply the forms that Bernini gives to water to expand our knowledge of the water entity (Carrino, 2021).

Method

Our research is a result of analyses that students have conducted in the field. We start mapping the main point of view of each site, and by using photographs and video at different hours of the day and in different periods of the season, we collect field images as a visual glossary for a group of established keywords that identify our project goals in each fountain (Cullen, 1976). We search for signs and behaviours to express our concepts, and after using images, we elaborate on each of the nine relational paths in a video to express emotional quality with visual narratives storyboard.

After that, we further establish the main systemic aspect of each concept, articulating three main phases in every proposal and referring to more knowledge of a sense of urgency in defence of water and participative community (Morin, 2004). As designers, we establish an open format that may evolve over time; the content may be upgraded in a more historical or scientific or artistic sense referring to the result or to stress more a particular urge emerging. Therefore, each of our concepts has a common matrix based on the logic of engaging and activating community but, at the same time, developing diversity to cover opposite aspects using the geometrical space dimension that Bernini has displayed in its sculptural complex (Montanari, 2004; Bacchi, Coliva, 2017).

The water entity suggests reflection in a more wide way, specifically how to define and connect the diversity and variation in her dimension for the living being for the environmental landscape and for the planet Terra (Lovelock, 1997). Using an intertwined complex texture (Morin, 2001), we use three levels of scales enhancing the inter-relations: macro-system, i.e., 'From Bernini Relational Journey for Water', split into three systems starting from the three fountains' sites or from the three main water goals (UN Water SDG, 2015).

Our manifesto of values for Bernini's Fontana del Tritone declares the following in an evocative form of water memories (Table 1).

Talk to me | *dialogue* is recognising oneself in vital reciprocity | **we witness enchanted the explosion of a call** | everything revolves around its being in constant movement | it needs gifts | which are **respect**, **care**, **observance**, | because here the water comes from a world of myths | emerges to mark a circular time | so Bernini wanted Water *powerful divinity beyond the human* | **as a warning of equity to be witnessed to**, | **element of healthiness—for well-being practices**, | **memento of nature yet to be recognised**.

Table 1. Reading of *Fontana del Tritone*: identity parameters for the concepts on this site.

Analysis parameters related to the sculptural complex	Narrative Theme	Compositional logic
quality and actions	memory emerges from the past in tension around himself tracks	
geometry of the sculptural group		upwards (escape upwards)
space dimension		circular (loop)

Results

In the macro-system "To Witness, To Practise, To Recognise: We see Water System," we have defined the complexities through experiential practices aimed at a continuous reflection on that triad. The community dimension is the competence to think about oneself in all three possibilities (Gardner, 2007; Bologna, 2015). The intent is to promote and disseminate the value of water. Each user will witness a story and will be an aware and complicit bearer of values based on mutual respect. Water and human communities are both flows that live in symbiosis (Weisman, 2007).

References

1. Bacchi, A., & Coliva, A. (2017). *Bernini*. Officina Libraria.
2. Bernini, G.L. (1648-51). Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi. Piazza Navona, Rome, Italy. Public open space. https://sovraintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_medioevale_e_moderna/fontane/fontana_dei_quattro_fiumi_in_piazza_navona
3. Bernini, G.L. (1626-29). Fontana della Barcaccia [Fountain]. Piazza di Spagna, Rome, Italy. Public square. https://sovraintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_medioevale_e_moderna/fontane/fontana_della_barcaccia
4. Bernini, G.L. (1642-43). Fontana del Tritone. Piazza Barberini, Rome, Italy. https://sovraintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/roma_medioevale_e_moderna/fontane/fontana_del_tritone
5. Bologna, G. (2015). *Manuale della sostenibilità. Idee, concetti, nuove discipline capaci di futuro* (1st ed). Edizioni Ambienti.
6. Lovelock, J. (1997) Gaia: una proprietà coesiva della vita (G. Bocchi trans.) (10th ed.) In Bocchi, G., & Ceruti, B. (1997). *La sfida della complessità*. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore.
7. Carrino, V., & Capri, A., & Michetti, V., & Palatucci, M. (2021). *Beyondstories. People Narrative makes a Territory.* (Pp 688 – 706) In Design Culture(s) Cumulus Conference Proceedings Series Roma 2021 Vol. # 2 https://cumulusroma2020.org/proceedings-files/DC(s)_PROCEEDINGS_full_vol2.pdf

8. Carrino, V., & Capoccia, G. (2021). *Kairos: How Digital Culture Heritage can improve society and its development through Systemic Design.* (p 4792) In Design Culture(s) Cumulus Conference Proceedings Series Roma 2021 Vol. # 2 https://cumulusroma2020.org/proceedings-files/DC(s)_PROCEEDINGS_full_vol2.pdf

9. Cullen, G. (1976). *Il paesaggio urbano. Morfologia e Progettazione* (R. D'Agostino trans) (1stt ed.) [Townscape]. Calderini Edizioni.

10. Bruner, J. (2003). *Due tipi di Pensiero*. In *La mente a più dimensioni* (R. Rini trans.) (1st ed.) [Narrative and Paradigmatic Modes of Thoughts. In Actual Minds, Possible Worlds]. Editori Laterza.

11. Gardner, H. (2007). *Cinque chiavi per il futuro* (E. Dornetti trans.) (1st ed.) [Five minds for the future]. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore.

12. Montanari, T. (2004). *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*. Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso.

13. Montanari, T. (Writer) Crescenti L. (Director) (2014). *La Libertà di Bernini*. [TV series]. [Video Podcast]. RAI 5. Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana. https://www.raiplay.it/programmi/lalibertadibernini

14. Montanari, T. (2016). *La libertà di Bernini. La sovranità dell'artista e le regole del potere* (1st ed). Giulio Einaudi Editore.

15. Morin, E. (2001). *Il metodo 1. La natura della natura* (G. Bocchi, A. Serra trans.) (1st ed.) [La Méthode 1. La Nature de la Nature]. Raffaello Cortina Editore.

16. Morin, E. (2004). Educare per l'era planetaria. Il pensiero complesso come metodo di apprendimento (B. Spadolini trans.) (1st ed.) [Éduquer pour l'ère planétaire, la pensée complexe comme méthode d'apprentissage dans l'erreur et l'incertitude humaine]. Armando Editore.

17. Morin, E. (2018). *Conoscenza, Ignoranza, Mistero* (S. Lazzari trans.) (1st ed.) [Connaissance, Ignorance, Mystère]. Raffaello Cortina Editore.

18. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (2015). (Last accessed, Sept 01, 2022). *Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all.* Retrieved from https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/

19. United Nation Sustainable Development Goals. (2015). (Last accessed, Sept 01, 2022). *Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.* Retrieved from https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/

20. United Nation World Water Day 2015. (2015). (Last accessed, Sept 01, 2022). *Water is equality*. *Water is health. Water is nature.* https://archive.worldwaterday.org/2015/learn/en/index.html

21. Weisman, A. (2007). *Il mondo senza di noi* (N. Gobetti, trans.) [The world without us]. Giulio Einaudi Editore.

Figures

Examples for the concept drawn from *Fontana del Tritone* (Figures 1-7).

By saying "talk to me," we want to underline the very specific gesture that triton is still doing: exploiting a signal, that is, a loud sound using water. Roman people used to call triton in the dialectal form 'er fanfara', impossible to translate, we could say 'ser fanfere' referring to the sound of a brass band, but it also means that he is calling us to pay attention because something is happening. The idea is that the messages are digital traces present in the water of the fountain: digital water waves just catch the content in the spheres (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Concept of water memories, multiple scenarios—an emotional visual tale of the virtual narrations that can be activated on the site.

Every time you frame the fountain, you receive an invitation to take a journey into memory by following traces of water (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Concept water memories, multiple scenarios—Collection of Gazes.

We have amplified the request for attention, activating the areas adjacent to the fountain that mark the presence of a call through the shell icon (Figure 3).
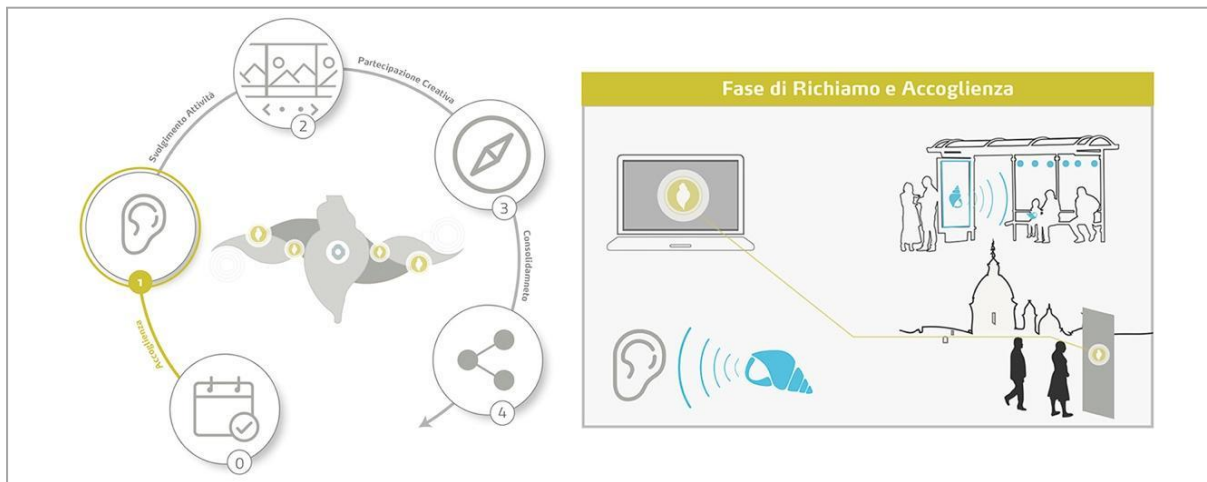

Figure 3. Concept water memories, multiple scenarios—Call and Welcome Phase in the relational path Water is … Nature.

The rotation that takes place around the fountain in its various axes in the path 'water is .. nature' allows by framing specific marker tags referring to the sculptural elements (dolphins, bees, the edge of the large shell, the tips of the triton's tail) to recall water landscapes, acquiring information on these, and updates on their state of health. The reading is on the personal device but active only on the site (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Concept of water memories, multiple scenarios. Marker tags recall the water landscape.

The menu allows you to explore the vital relationship that water has with other landscapes through icons that favour animals or elements of the flora. These are narrator witnesses through a podcast giving the observer a broader meaning to the depiction of the divinity who announces but also knows how to calm storms (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Concept water memories, multiple scenarios. Explore content through audio/podcast.

The *Fontana del Tritone* is a key point in the water pipeline *Acquedotto Felice*, within the city. Following the main icon of the triton's shell, visits are suggested (Figure 6).
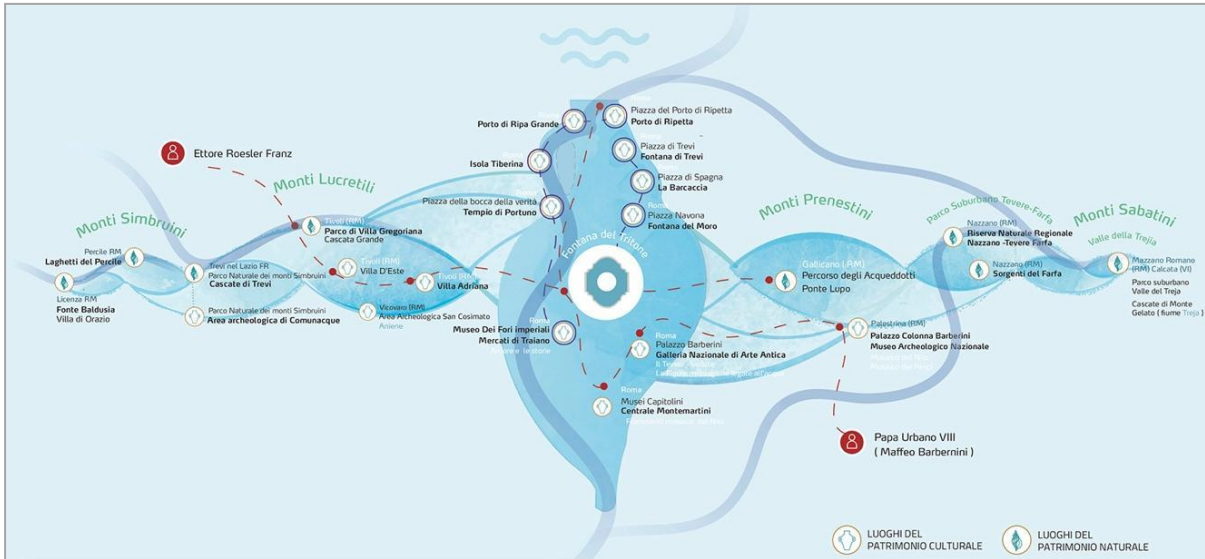

Figure 6. Concept water memories, multiple scenarios. Further linked visit suggestions.

Figure 7. Concept water memories, multiple scenarios—Collection of Gazes, analysis phase.