

## E-motional landscapes

A visual experimental study for the Xylella case in  
Salento.

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**Theoretical premises** - In the last twenty years, geographic research has witnessed an unprecedented and exponential multiplication of media images of places and events linked to the territory, which has given rise to a veritable *iconosphere* and, at the same time, to the growing variety of media supports and sources (digital platforms, blogs, on-demand television, the web, social networks, videocasts, podcasts, instant messaging, etc.), to the point where it is possible to consider media content as an integrative and supplementary methodological opportunity for geographic research (Garrett, 2011).

What appears particularly significant is that, in some cases, it is the visual sphere itself that contributes to the construction of geographical reality, since media representations contribute to activating important processes of organization and reorganization of the perceptive dimension (individual and collective) of places (Rose, 2001).

In these cases, we are faced with dynamics that are the object of study of Media Geography, a field of experimental investigation that observes the performative dimension of media products in the construction of the perception and identity of places, in a relationship of mutual definition that we

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could summarise with “Place in Media, Media in Place” (Zimmermann, 2007; Schwartz, 2008).

As regards, in particular, the construction of geographical reality through visual contributions, from products inserted in professional production circuits to narratives developed in the social-media sphere, by virtue of their strong power – which we could define as *world building* – they are rightly considered by researchers as new opportunities for investigation, supplementary to the traditional instruments of geographical research. This is because the great mass of image production (videos, photos, films, visual narratives) gives rise to a long and complex series of epistemological, hermeneutical and methodological implications (Roberts, 2012). The contamination between visual methodologies and spatial analysis is part of a conception of geography that – taking cues from *non-representational theory* (Thrift, 2008) – opens up to multiple points of view, perspectives and cognitive strategies of the emotional and affective relationship that binds people to places.

This opens the way to a reflection about the possibility of a recourse to visual tools to explore the social perception of the territory and, ultimately, to investigate the semantic and symbolic chiaroscuro of the processes of territorialization that ensue, around which the population builds its own project of existence and resistance.

**Case study** - Therefore, the research aims to investigate the reactions of the local population – often marked by a sort of distrust of the explanations accredited by science – to the Xylella phenomenon, through the proposal of an experimental visual study, entitled “E-motional Landscape. A visual study for Xylella case in Salento”. Starting from the self-produced short-documentary we will investigate a possible methodology for the construction of an orientative narrative (Pollice, 2017) that

offers valuable information on the social perception of the Salento phytosanitary disaster.

Through the use of a territorialist (Raffestin, 1986) and geosemiotic approach, a critique of visual narration will be conducted, with the aim of obtaining information on the conflict – understood as a field of dialectical formation of visions and vectors of meaning – of visual interpretations of the Xylella phenomenon. Indeed, in recent years, there have been numerous *non-fiction* film narratives by Salento-based videomakers, who have contributed to the creation of a veritable narrative ecosystem of the suffering olive trees in Salento.

Through the interception of co-production funds to support the creation of audiovisual products (mostly granted by the Apulia Film Commission) or the promotion of crowdfunding campaigns, in fact, the documentary production on the bacteriological epidemic in Salento has recorded, in recent years, an interesting trend in terms of quality and variety of narratives produced, each carrying a particular look at the phenomenon and, therefore, worthy of attention. This is linked to the performative nature of the production of images, which operates an aesthetic and synthetic mediation between objects and subjects capable of involving the communicative and ideological dimension in the understanding of the processes of construction of territorialities, imaginaries and discourses and in the explanation of the relationships between facts and representations, between materiality and immateriality.

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