

# TRAVEL AS A NARRATIVE

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FROM LITERARY  
EXPERIENCE TO  
ARCHITECTURAL  
SPACE

Where to next?

THE BOOK OF  
METHODS

04

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# PREFACE

This research plan is part of the one-year research and design trajectory of Explore Lab, a graduation studio within the MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences program at Delft University of Technology.

Explore Lab is a studio that encourages students to design their own curriculum by pursuing personal fascinations within the field of architecture. This approach leads to projects involving extensive research, culminating in both a research paper and a linked design proposal.

This part of the research paper establishes a foundation for translating literary experiences, emotions, and journeys into architectural design. It outlines the guiding principles and strategies that address the project questions of where, what, and how.

# ABSTRACT

Inspired by the notion that people frame their lives and experiences through stories (Sartre 1938), this thesis explores the role of narrative in architectural design, proposing that architecture is not merely a physical space but an intricate interplay of tangible and intangible elements shaping human experiences within the built environment (Pérez-Gómez 2016).

The research explores how literature can inform architectural design, emphasizing the importance of atmosphere and embodied experiences (Pallasmaa 2005; Zumthor 2006). It addresses key questions about translating narratives into functional design and extends the concept of narrative-driven architecture beyond temporary installations to permanent contexts.

Through theoretical research, case studies, literature analysis, and personal narrative surveys, the study aims to identify design principles and strategies that offer a cohesive vision for integrating narrative, atmosphere, and embodied experience into architectural design.

By anchoring the design process in an existing literary narrative, particularly using travelogues and travel memoirs, the project seeks to capture the essence of travel within built environments, translating the emotional and sensory journeys of travellers into architectural elements. Ultimately, it aspires to create spaces that are both emotionally resonant and functionally purposeful.

Keywords: narrative, storytelling, translation, metaphors, atmosphere, experience, emotions, travel



Figure 1. *Montepulciano* by Simon Shiff

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# 01

# INTRODUCTION

## THESIS TOPIC DESIGN BRIEF

## THESIS TOPIC

*“...a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them...”*

- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, 1938

Architecture is more than just the physical space; it's a complex interplay of both tangible and intangible elements... where buildings and humans engage in a continuous dialogue... where spaces act as stages which users navigate, crafting their own stories while the environment influences their experiences and emotions (Pallasmaa 2005). But how well can architectural elements impact those experiences? How well can they also tell their own story?

Inspired by the notion that people frame their lives and experiences through stories (Sartre 1938), my approach explores using narrative as the foundation for architectural design. This perspective emphasizes creating environments that are not only emotionally resonant but also practical and functional. Rather than beginning with a task, site, or program, I am drawn to the idea of starting with a narrative.

Since travel itself is a narrative journey (Mikkonen 2007), where each destination, encounter, and experience adds a chapter to our personal story, travelogues and memoirs provide an ideal foundation for design exploration. Unlike guidebooks, these literary forms delve into sensory and emotional reflections, capturing moments of discovery and transformation. By encapsulating the essence of movement, place, and emotion, they offer a rich source of inspiration for creating meaningful, atmospheric spaces that translate literary journeys into spatial experiences.

This part is the final part of the research and it establishes a foundational approach to translating literary experiences derived from travelogues, along with the emotions and journeys they evoke, into architectural design. By drawing inspiration from the narratives and themes explored in the books, this framework bridges the gap between abstract literary concepts and tangible architectural spaces.

The guiding principles and strategies outlined address the core project questions of where, what, and how:

**Where:** Identifying the spatial contexts and exact location based on the examined travelogues, including the environments, landscapes, or cultural references that anchor the design.

**What:** Defining the experiences and therefore the function that emerges from the literary analysis, such as the types of spaces or atmospheres.

**How:** Using the the methodologies and creative processes based on the gathered knowledge to transform literary themes into architectural expressions.

Each design decision is informed by the rich insights and imagery found in the books, ensuring that the architectural outcome is deeply rooted in the essence of the narratives. This literary foundation not only guides the design process but also enriches the resulting spaces with layers of meaning and emotional resonance.

# DESIGN BRIEF

The culmination of the project lies in design.

Through extensive research and reflection, the influence of the topic, research question, and base literature has led me toward a central concept - a meeting point of stories.

The design draws inspiration from the themes and ideas explored in four travelogues - *A Room with a View* by E.M. Forster, *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones, and *Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy* by Frances Mayes. These literary works have been thoroughly analysed and now they serve as a foundation for creating a framework that translates their narratives into physical design. This way, the gap between abstract literary themes and tangible architectural spaces is bridged, bringing the stories to life in a built environment.

Based on the gathered knowledge, the proposed building redefines traditional understanding of housing and hospitality by combining elements of both. It introduces a hybrid residence - a space that functions both as a home for locals and an immersive experience for visitors. This innovative design seeks to create new value for the community while offering tourists an authentic connection to the local way of life.

In that way, the aim of the project is to combine elements of community living, hospitality, ambiance and environmental harmony, blending public and private domains to foster meaningful connections between users and their surroundings.

Furthermore, this approach balances functionality with the exploration of atmosphere and experiential design, creating a space that is not only practical but also rich in sensory and emotional depth.

***“The promise is about creating this authentic hotel experience where people can lodge in a place that makes them feel inspired and part of the cities they visit.”***  
- Avi Brosh



Figure 2. Montepulciano by Wanderers Compass

# 02 LOCATION

## MONTEPULCIANO RELATION TO CROATIA

The books guiding this project led to the site location through overlap of all mentioned locations. With a shared theme of Tuscany and its hill towns, the key considerations for choosing the location were proximity to a town, a peaceful natural setting, and scenic views. Based on these factors, along with the locations in the books, Montepulciano was the ideal choice.

To gain a better understanding of the life there, the book *At Least You're in Tuscany: A Somewhat Disastrous Quest for the Sweet Life* by Jennifer Criswell offered valuable insights.

Montepulciano is a charming hill town in southern Tuscany, with a population of around 14 000 people. Located atop a limestone ridge at an altitude of 605 meters above sea level between the Val d'Orcia and the Val di Chiana, it boasts breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. Known for its rich history and exceptional wines, Montepulciano offers visitors an authentic Tuscan experience, blending stunning landscapes with cultural and culinary delights. During the Middle Ages, the town was a source of constant conflict between Florence and Siena, leading to a unique blend of Gothic and Renaissance architectural styles that remain well-preserved today (Novak 2024).

The surrounding countryside is lush with vineyards and olive groves, creating a serene and picturesque environment, while the town itself is vibrant and full of life. Montepulciano is celebrated for its various festivals, iconic filming locations, exquisite gastronomy, and, of course, world-renowned wine, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*.

This prestigious red wine, made from Sangiovese grapes, holds the esteemed *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG) status. Alongside *Brunello di Montalcino* and *Chianti Classico*, it is one of Tuscany's principal red wines (Cindrić 2017).

## WHERE?



# MONTEPULCIANO

Visiting Montepulciano offers an authentic Tuscan experience, where history, culture, and natural beauty seamlessly converge. The town itself is lively and culturally rich, with charming narrow streets, artisan shops, and inviting trattorias. It is celebrated for its well-preserved architecture, which includes Renaissance palaces, charming piazzas, and historic churches. The main square of Montepulciano, Piazza Grande, is surrounded by stunning Renaissance buildings, including the Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall), which resembles a mini version of Florence's Palazzo Vecchio, and the Duomo di Montepulciano, a simple yet beautiful church built in the 16th century.

Community is central to life in Montepulciano, with festivals, religious celebrations, and events bringing locals together. One of Montepulciano's most famous events, the *Bravio delle Botti*, is an annual barrel-rolling race through the town's narrow streets held in August (Damijanić 2022).

*Bravio delle Botti* itself has a long history, dating back to the 14th century when the race was originally held on horseback. Today, it uses wine barrels, reflecting Montepulciano's renowned red wine, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano* (Damijanić 2022).

Montepulciano has also served as a filming location for movies such as *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) (Criswell 2012).

Beyond its cultural and historical riches, Tuscany offers a wide range of culinary and gastronomic experiences. From traditional food markets and village fairs to cooking classes (Criswell 2012) and guided culinary tours, visitors can explore the region's world-renowned cuisine. The region's wine routes and olive oil trails allow visitors to connect directly with local producers, enhancing their travel experiences. As Tuscany's food and wine offerings expand, the region remains one of the most sought-after gastronomic destinations in the world (Novak 2024).

**"Montepulciano is shamelessly seductive. It confidently puts it all there: breathtaking landscapes, beautiful houses, and rich offerings. One can't but lust, so I drooled my way from one window shop to the next..." (p.248)**  
- *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones

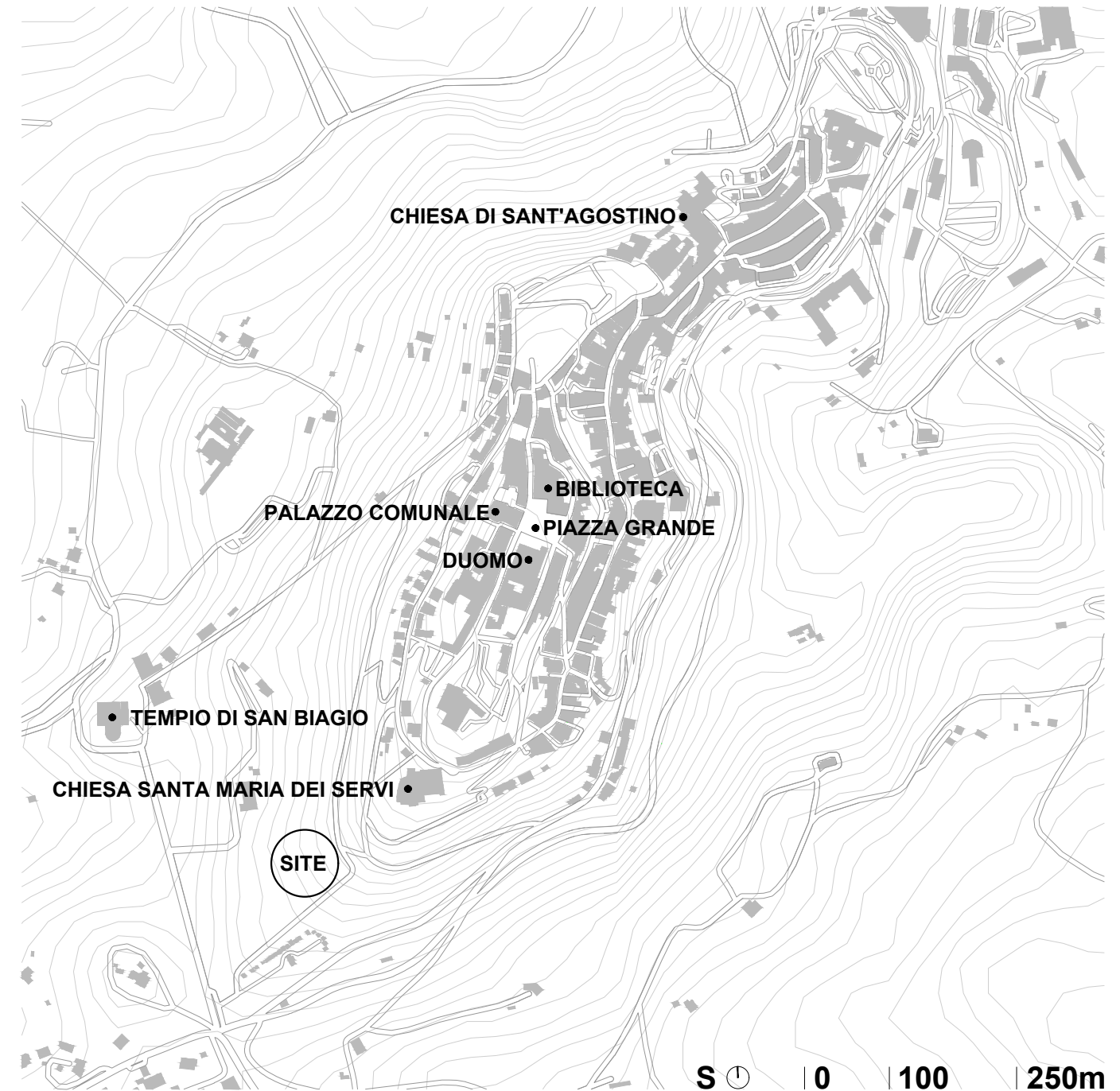


Figure 3. Map of Montepulciano by Marta Lulić

# TUSCANY

In Tuscan's hill towns, mornings often begin with a visit to a local café for an espresso or cappuccino, accompanied by a pastry like a cornetto. Cafés serve as social hubs where locals, usually between 40 and 50 years old (UrbiStat 2022), gather to chat and exchange news.

Residents may then visit the weekly outdoor market or specialty shops for fresh produce, local cheeses, and meats. Seasonal ingredients like truffles, mushrooms, and wild herbs feature prominently in local cooking.

Lunch, typically the main meal of the day, is often enjoyed at home or in a family-run trattoria, with dishes like handmade pici pasta, pecorino cheese, and hearty soups such as ribollita. After lunch, it's common to take a short rest or "siesta," especially during the hot summer months. Many shops close for a few hours in the afternoon and reopen later (Jones 2021).

Afternoons might be spent strolling through the town or enjoying its theatres and festivals. As Frances Mayes described in *Under the Tuscan Sun*, 'We all ride over to Montepulciano to see a medieval pageant scene filmed in the piazza', capturing the town's timeless allure and cultural vibrancy.

This timeless character is also reflected in the region's architecture. Tuscany owes much of its charm to traditional building techniques that reflect a profound connection to the land. These methods prioritize the use of locally sourced natural materials, sustainable practices, and skilled craftsmanship, often characterized by simple yet elegant geometric shapes.

Local stone, such as pietra serena and travertine, is a hallmark of Tuscan construction. Quarried locally to minimize transportation, these materials lend buildings their distinctive looks.

Stone is frequently used for structural walls, foundations, and decorative features like arches and lintels.

Handmade terracotta bricks and tiles are another staple of Tuscan architecture. Terracotta roof tiles, carefully arranged in layered patterns, ensure effective water runoff while contributing to the region's iconic skyline.

Wood is traditionally used for beams and frameworks, while technique of dry-stone walls involves stacking stones without mortar to create terraces, boundary walls, and even building foundations. It is not only eco-friendly but also allows for natural drainage, preserving soil integrity. To coat walls, lime-based plaster and stucco finishes - often tinted with natural pigments - are used to provide insulation and protection against moisture. The resulting finishes not only enhance durability but also contribute to the region's aesthetic unity.

Tuscany's building techniques emphasize harmony with the environment. Homes are often positioned to maximize natural light and ventilation, reducing the need for artificial heating and cooling. Thick walls made of stone or brick regulate indoor temperatures, providing insulation year-round (Criswell 2012). Furthermore, the widespread use of arches and vaulted ceilings, a legacy of Etruscan and Roman design, remains iconic in Tuscan architecture (Despot and Sandeva 2016).

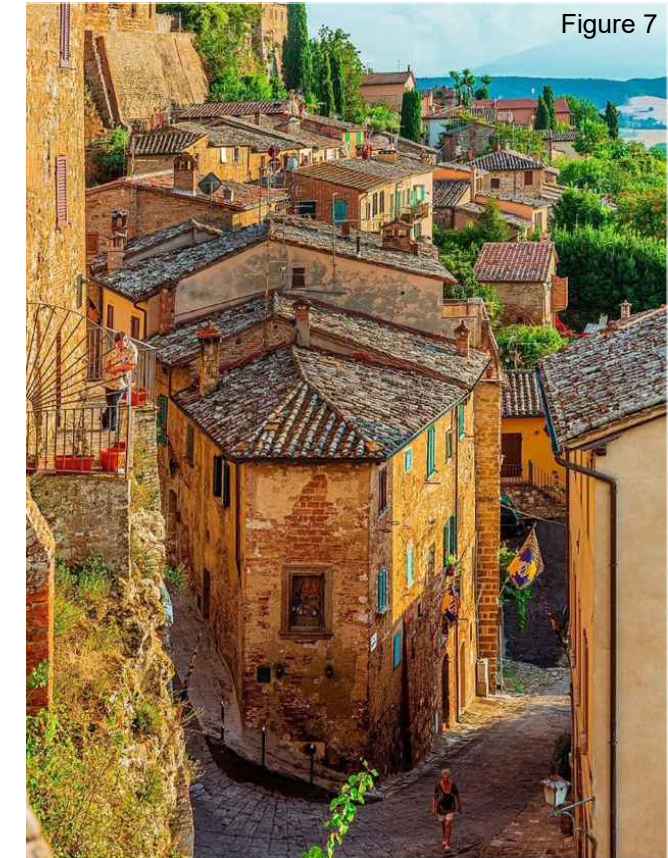


Figure 4-8. Montepulciano

# AGRITOURISM

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that invites visitors to immerse themselves in the natural, cultural, and traditional essence of rural areas, offering a slower pace of life, scenic landscapes, and authentic countryside experiences. Unlike mass tourism, it focuses on intimate activities in smaller, tranquil areas often run by family-owned businesses. Visitors engage in agricultural experiences, cultural exploration, outdoor adventures, and wellness, fostering a deeper connection to the land and local communities. Beyond personal enrichment, rural tourism plays a crucial role in revitalizing villages, preserving cultural and natural heritage, supporting local income, creating jobs, fostering community engagement and combating rural depopulation (Šajin and Finer 2023).

Agritourism is a specific form of rural tourism where the tourist experience is rooted in agricultural activities. It offers them an authentic glimpse into rural life, including participating in agricultural work, tasting local specialties and learning about traditions.

Main activities involve visits to farms, fruit picking, milking cows, harvesting grapes, and education on local agricultural practices as wine and olive oil production. In addition to that, many destinations provide participation in community customs and other cultural activities like cooking classes and craft workshops, creating a well-rounded rural adventure.

Combining elements of travel, education, and recreation, agritourism offers a unique opportunity to escape urban life and connect with nature, culture, and the roots of food production (Balić 2021).

Agritourism is the fastest growing form of tourism in Italy, with Tuscany leading the way. In fact, Tuscany was the first Italian region to recognise the importance of integrated rural development, passing the first regional law on agritourism in 1985. This law aimed to create a more comprehensive tourist offer and prevent depopulation in the area (Grgić et al. 2015).

Tuscany, is therefore often cited as one of the most successful examples of rural tourism and agritourism in Europe (Grgić et al. 2015). Its unique blend of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, traditional gastronomy and wine, makes it an ideal destination for the development of these forms of tourism.

Agritourism in Tuscany is particularly based on preserving the traditional way of life and valorising agricultural products. Numerous farms offer accommodation in rustic villas and farmhouses, where tourists can enjoy nature, taste local products and participate in activities such as grape and olive harvesting or learning traditional recipes (Vučić 2018).

The region of Tuscany successfully balances the preservation of heritage and the encouragement of tourism investments. For example, the legislative framework in Italy (*Legge nazionale sull'agriturismo*) makes it easier for farmers to diversify their income through tourism, while regional laws additionally support specific programs and activities aimed at rural tourism. The Tuscan model is often used as an example of a successful approach to revitalizing rural areas (Balić 2021).



Figure 9. Farmhouse in Val d'Orcia by Casa Romana

# SITE

**"I loved living in the very heart of the city, so I could come and go as I pleased a dozen times a day."**

- *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones (p.124)

**"The house, only two kilometres from town, feels like a deep country place. We can't see any neighbors, although we hear the man way above us calling *vieni qua, come here, to his dog.*"**

- *Under the Tuscan Sun* by Frances Mayes (p.74)

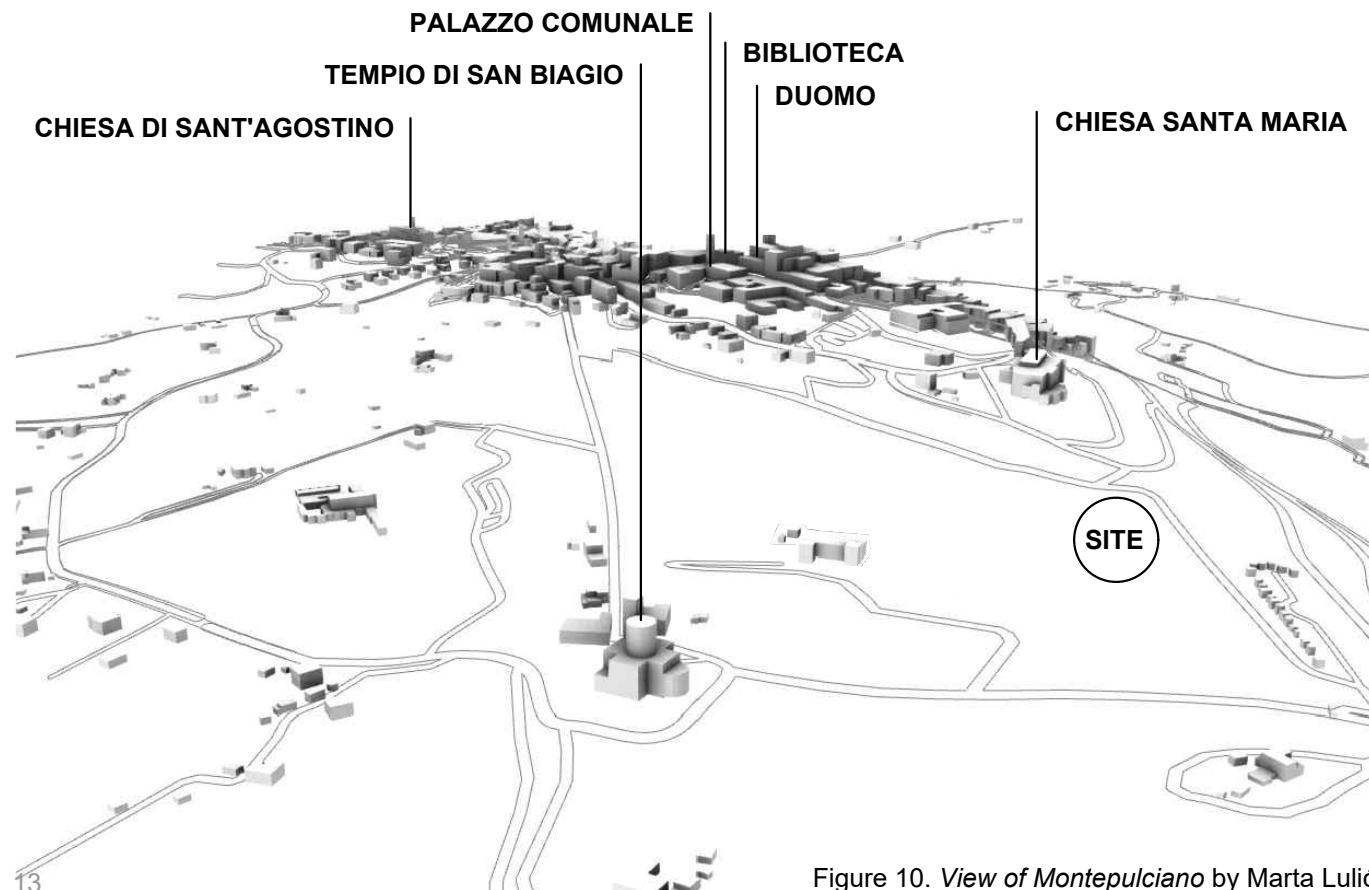


Figure 10. *View of Montepulciano* by Marta Lulić

When choosing a location in Montepulciano, it was clear that the chosen site needed to balance authenticity, convenience, and a connection to nature. The heart of the town, where many locals tend to live, offers a rich cultural experience, while the outskirts provide tranquillity and stunning views of the Tuscan landscape. This combination of factors led to the selection of a specific site that perfectly embodies these qualities.

The chosen location is situated on a slope, offering picturesque views toward the west and south, ideal for enjoying long hours of sunlight and breathtaking sunsets. It is conveniently close to the city centre, within easy walking distance, yet remains slightly removed to provide privacy and serenity. The main Piazza Grande is just a 10-minute walk away, while the Tempio di San Biagio can be reached in about 15 minutes. Surrounded by greenery, the site provides a harmonious blend of serenity and privacy of natural beauty and cultural immersion.

Insights from base literature reinforced this decision, emphasizing the allure of both urban convenience and rural charm. Rada Jones, in *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir*, highlights the joys of living in the town's heart, while Frances Mayes in *Under the Tuscan Sun* describes the peace of a countryside home just outside town, where nature and solitude dominate.

This site offers users an atmospheric and immersive Italian experience, allowing them to connect deeply with the local culture and enjoy the natural surroundings.

Figure 11-13. *Site*



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

# RELATION TO CROATIA

Another layer that can be added to expand on the project's location in Italy is the inclusion of a personal narrative, highlighting its connection to my home country, Croatia.

Particularly, the similarities between Tuscany and the Croatian region of Istria highlight a shared Mediterranean heritage, with both regions exhibiting many cultural, historical, architectural, and geographical parallels. These commonalities stem from their deep historical connections, reflecting their intertwined past and mutual influences that have shaped their distinct yet comparable landscapes and traditions.

Istria, often called Croatia's Tuscany (Wiseman 2019), is renowned for its stunning coastline and idyllic beaches, while inland it features lush vineyards, olive groves, truffle-filled forests, and medieval hilltop towns resembling Tuscany's landscapes. Geographically, both regions share similar features, such as gentle hills and abundant vineyards and olive groves, leading to frequent comparisons in (agro)tourism and gastronomy.

Pula (Fig.16) is the largest city in Istria and it's a home to many ancient landmarks, including a 1st century AD Roman amphitheater. Rovinj boasts a beautifully preserved Old Town and seaside charm, while medieval Motovun (Fig.18) in central Istria sits atop a hill and is renowned as one of the most picturesque towns. There are plenty of other small hill towns such as Oprtalj (Fig.15), Grožnjan (Fig.19), Bale (Fig.17)...

Istria was ruled by the Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, Habsburgs, and Napoleon. It came under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1814. Afterward, it became part of Italy and was then ceded to Yugoslavia. In 1991, with the breakup of Yugoslavia and Croatia's independence, it became one of the regions in Croatia (Goldstein 1999).

Italy's rule over Istria left a deep mark on its cultural heritage, shaping its architecture, art, and social structures. From the stone-built structures and synergy of agriculture and tourism to the emphasis on a relaxed, quality lifestyle, there is a clear resonance between the way of living in both areas.

In relation to the topic of travelogues, it is also worth mentioning the ones focused on the Croatian coast, with significant emphasis on Istria.

British consul Richard Burton, during his visits to Istria, collected geographical, historical, and ethnographic data. In his work *Note sopra i Castellieri o rovine preistoriche della Penisola Istriana del capitano*, he portrayed the inhabitants of Istria as exemplary, hardworking, tidy, and polite. Burton likened Istria's landscapes to Italian ones, highlighting its "wild and romantic" inland fortresses and clean coastal cities adorned with Roman-Venetian architecture (Trtanj 2023).

Similarly, in *The Shores of the Adriatic*, F.H. Jackson provided a detailed account of Istria, focusing on Svetvinčenat, home to one of the best-preserved Istrian castles. His descriptions extended to local traditions, knightly tournaments, and the castles and prisons of the region (Trtanj 2023).

French author Charles Yriarte contributed further with his richly illustrated works on Istria and Dalmatia, offering thorough depictions of cities like Pula, Vrsar, Rovinj, and Pazin, as well as their surrounding landscapes. His writings detailed the region's natural resources, the habits of its people, and the developmental potential of Istria. Yriarte's legacy preserves a wealth of data on Istrian life during the 19th century, including its cultural and architectural heritage (Trtanj 2023).

Figure 14. *Map of Tuscany and Italy* by Marta Lulić

# TUSCANY & ISTRIA



Figure 15. *Opatlj*



Figure 16. *Pula*

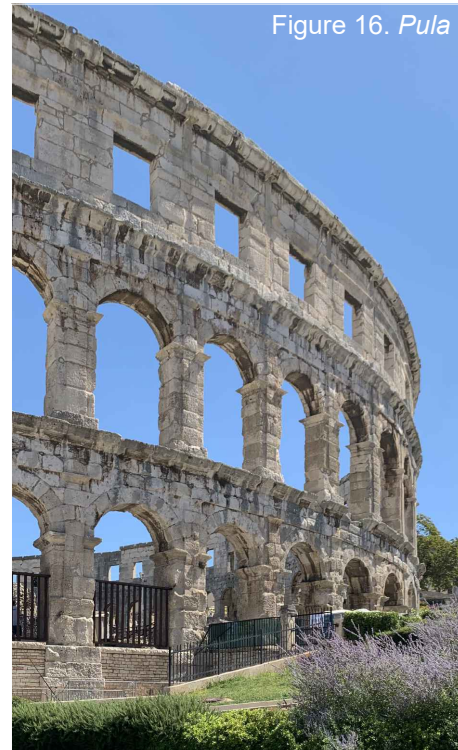


Figure 18. *Motovun*



Figure 20. *Motovun*



Figure 19. *Grožnjan*



Figure 17. *Bale*



# 03 DESIGN MANIFESTO

**GUIDING QUOTES  
DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

## WHAT?

The culmination of this project lies in a design that emerges from using existing narratives from literature as its foundation.

Extensive research has been conducted to establish a framework for concept and design development, including a detailed study of guiding narratives and theoretical frameworks. This has led to a central concept - a meeting point of stories.

The idea lies in redefining the traditional understanding of travelling and travel accommodations by introducing a new concept - a new approach both to living and travelling. It envisions a space where both locals and travellers coexist, bringing together people from all walks of life in a shared environment.

Inspired by Tuscany, agritourism and its timeless beauty, rich heritage, and vibrant community, the aim is to create a space that immerses travellers in genuine Tuscan life. It invites them to engage with locals and experience the essence of the town and truly play a part in it.

Moreover, the idea is deeply rooted in themes that celebrate life, slow living, pleasure, culture, and community.

This central concept can be described in various ways, including a dual-use housing, mixed-stay building, co-living hotel, community stay, and living habitat.

To successfully design a building that captures the essence of narratives, travelling, Tuscan tradition and locality, a set of design principles has been established.

This hybrid building is going to be a seamless fusion of living and hospitality, where locals and visitors coexist in harmony. It will be more than a place to stay; it will be a meeting point of stories, a place that fosters experience, connection and a sense of belonging for both locals and visitors.

The space will encourage slow living, sensory delight, and comfort, resonating with the pleasures of good food, time spent with loved ones, and connection to both place and self. Visitors will experience a more intimate, community-centred atmosphere, enriching their stay and their connection with the local environment.

Through thoughtfully chosen materials, light, sound, and temperature, the atmosphere will transform the building into an immersive experience that evokes emotions and fosters a profound sense of belonging. This design is not aimed for vacation, but for travelling, experiencing and evolving.

By balancing functionality with atmosphere, the design framework will foster exploration and experiential play, creating a space where every moment feels intentional and connected.

# GUIDING QUOTES

The following quotes provide foundational support for the design and concept development framework:

***To make matters even more confusing, I'd also been dying lately to get over to Italy, so I could practice speaking Italian, but also because I was drawn to the idea of living for a while in a culture where pleasure and beauty are valued. (p.30)***

- Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

***But is it such a bad thing to live like this for just a little while? Just for a few months of one's life, is it so awful to travel through time with no greater ambition than to find the next lovely meal? Or to learn how to speak a language for no higher purpose than that it pleases your ear to hear it? Or to nap in a garden, in a patch of sunlight, in the middle of the day, right next to your favourite fountain? And then to do it again the next day? (p.119)***

- Eat, Pray, Love by Elizabeth Gilbert

***Living in someone's home is fascinating. It's more voyeuristic than looking into people's houses through lit windows, though not quite as bad as watching some reality shows. You don't get to see the people, but you get to see their lives: you eat from their dishes, sleep between their sheets, and read their books. The most revealing thing is the fridge. You won't believe what you can learn about people by studying their fridge. And their pantry. (p.48)***

- Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir by Rada Jones

***I'll also miss our adventures. We're no longer young but still love to explore and enjoy life. We delight in nice dinners and good wine and laugh at things nobody else understands. (p.180)***

- Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir by Rada Jones

***We left delighted, not only with the food but the owner's hospitality and the warmth of four generations of Italians sharing the pleasure of their lunch, the fire, and each other. It melted my heart to see the old man showing the toddlers how to warm their hands to the fire - close, but not too close - and the tired women's smiles. (p.186)***

- Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir by Rada Jones

***Eating in Tuscany is always an experience. Not because of the food - the food is always fantastic, and the wine washing it down is stupendous. But it's not about the food. It's about the people. (p.252)***

- Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir by Rada Jones

# FRAMEWORK

***Here, I am restored to the basic pleasure of connection to the outdoors. The windows are open to butterflies, horseflies, bees, or anything that wants to come in one window and out another. We eat outside almost every meal. I'm restored to my mother's sense of preserving the seasons and to time, even time to take pleasure in polishing a pane of glass to a shine. To the house safe for dreaming. (p.88)***

- Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

***In my next life, when I am an architect, I always will design houses with kitchens that open to the outdoors. I love stepping out to head and tail my beans while sitting on the stone wall. I set dirty pots out to soak, dry my dishcloths on the wall, empty excess clean water on the arugula, thyme, and rosemary right outside the door. Since the double door is open day and night in summer, the kitchen fills with light and air. A wasp - is it the same one? - flies in every day and drinks from the faucet, then flies right out. (p.115)***

- Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

***Whatever a guidebook says, whether or not you leave somewhere with a sense of the place is entirely a matter of smell and instinct. There are places I've been which are lost to me. (p.146)***

- Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

***Life in Tuscany altered my compass. If I went there for the art, food, culture, and landscape, I stayed for the people who live with a vivacity toward every day. I'm seduced by the Italian ability to enjoy life. My neighbours and friends have a particular genius for celebration at the table. The pleasures of eating and drinking are never tortured into psychological struggles. Instead, the relaxation around food is extraordinary. No need to ask if you can bring an extra guest or two. Throw in another handful of pasta; grab a chair. So much is revealed by how food gets to the table-who prepares it (everyone in the family), who's seated (great-grandfather and two-year-old toddler), what's the dynamic at the table (shouting, talking all at once, singing, card playing afterwards). For me, product of a lavish Southern table, food was the defining point of turning me half-Tuscan. The life around the table reminds me of the South. Every time I pull up my chair to a friend's table, I know that I am home. (p.292)***

- Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

***These old hill towns retain an intense sense of community. If I were writing Under the Tuscan Sun today, some things would be different. The magnetic pull of the piazza would not. (p.294)***

- Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

## **LOCAL INTEGRATION**

The design should honour the unique character of the location by using natural materials like stone, terracotta, and wood, and respecting vernacular architectural styles. In this way, the building is going to blend with the local aesthetic and landscape, creating harmony and serving as a natural extension of the environment.

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANIC FORM**

The design should embrace natural shapes and organic forms that seamlessly blend into the environment. By incorporating sustainable practices - such as using local materials, maximizing natural light, and integrating greenery - the connection between the building and its surroundings will be further strengthened.

## **CULTURAL IMMERSION**

The design should embrace local community and traditions, playing a crucial role in enriching the experience and offering travellers authentic insights into local life. Priority should be given to creating areas for communal dining and gatherings, where food serves as a medium for connection, reflecting Tuscan tradition.

## **HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN**

The design should prioritize spaces that invite interaction and create opportunities for connection. By considering how inhabitants and visitors move through and experience the space, the design should foster relationships among individuals, between people, and with their surroundings.

## **CONNECTION TO NATURE**

The design should have a strong relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces. This way, the design not only enhances the well-being but also reflects the Tuscan lifestyle of living in close symbiosis with the land.

## **CELEBRATION OF SIMPLE PLEASURES**

The design should embody the Italian ethos, where beauty is woven into daily life, and joy is found in small moments and the pursuit of simple pleasures. The spaces should encourage slowing down, savouring life, embracing the present moment, and rediscovering the joy of every day.

## **EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE**

The design should be experiential, offering a range of sensory experiences that evoke various emotions, much like the journey of travel. Each space should invite exploration and reflection, allowing individuals to connect deeply with their surroundings and themselves.

## **SENSE OF BELONGING**

The ultimate goal of the design is to make people feel like part of the community adding a new value both for the locals and for the travellers.

Where do we begin?

# 04 DESIGN STRATEGIES

## PROGRAM ELEMENTS & MATERIALS

Design strategies translate design principles into actionable steps and tangible outcomes.

The architectural potential of this project is deeply rooted in the principles of exploration, cultural immersion, and sensory engagement. It focuses on crafting spaces that foster connection, honour local traditions, and create meaningful personal experiences. Moreover, it embraces the ideas of slow living, sensory delight, and the timeless joy of community, connection and gathering around shared experiences.

The building aims to provide an enriching home for locals, offering opportunities to engage in a vibrant community, while simultaneously delivering an authentic, memorable experience for travellers that deepens their understanding of local culture.

Guided by the concept of creating this hybrid space - a home for both locals and travellers - the design promotes balanced coexistence, ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging. It emphasizes shared spaces that encourage interaction, connection, and exploration, while respecting individual privacy and cultural identity.

This chapter outlines the strategies that guide the design, serving as a roadmap for creating spaces that are both functional and meaningful. The selected elements and materials act as a catalogue for design as they emphasize the creation of an immersive atmosphere that engages all senses through materiality, textures, colours, sounds, and scents. The chapter also introduces the main building program, developed to align with this vision, the design principles, and the supporting research.

## HOW?

### **BUILDING PROGRAM:**

#### Communal Culinary Spaces:

- dedicated to celebrating the joys of food and wine, highlighting traditional dishes and local ingredients
- open-plan kitchens, open dining areas, communal tables, outdoor dining spaces, wine rooms, tasting rooms, wine bar, restaurant, café

#### Social Spaces:

- welcoming communal and gathering spaces where people are drawn to socialize, relax, and meet
- living rooms, playrooms, communal lounges, lobby, sitting rooms

#### Spaces for Pleasure:

- designed for leisure, reflection, relaxation, and enjoyment of slow living
- pool, spa, wellness areas, lounging spaces, reading rooms, sunrooms

#### Residential Zones:

- private areas for solitude and rest
- sleeping rooms, bathrooms, and small balconies

#### Commons:

- spaces where people come together to share knowledge, experiences, and culture, emphasizing inclusivity, community, and the blending of traditional and contemporary practices
- cooking classes, wine-making classes, working in the garden, artisan workshops (e.g. hand-painting tiles, terracotta production...)

#### Outdoor Areas:

- gardens, terraces, courtyards, balconies, outdoor dining spaces, vineyards, orchards, olive groves

# ELEMENTS & MATERIALS

The selected elements and materials act as a catalogue for design as they emphasize the creation of an immersive atmosphere, engaging all senses through materiality, textures, colours, sounds, and scents. Each design choice correlates with a specific feeling or experience.

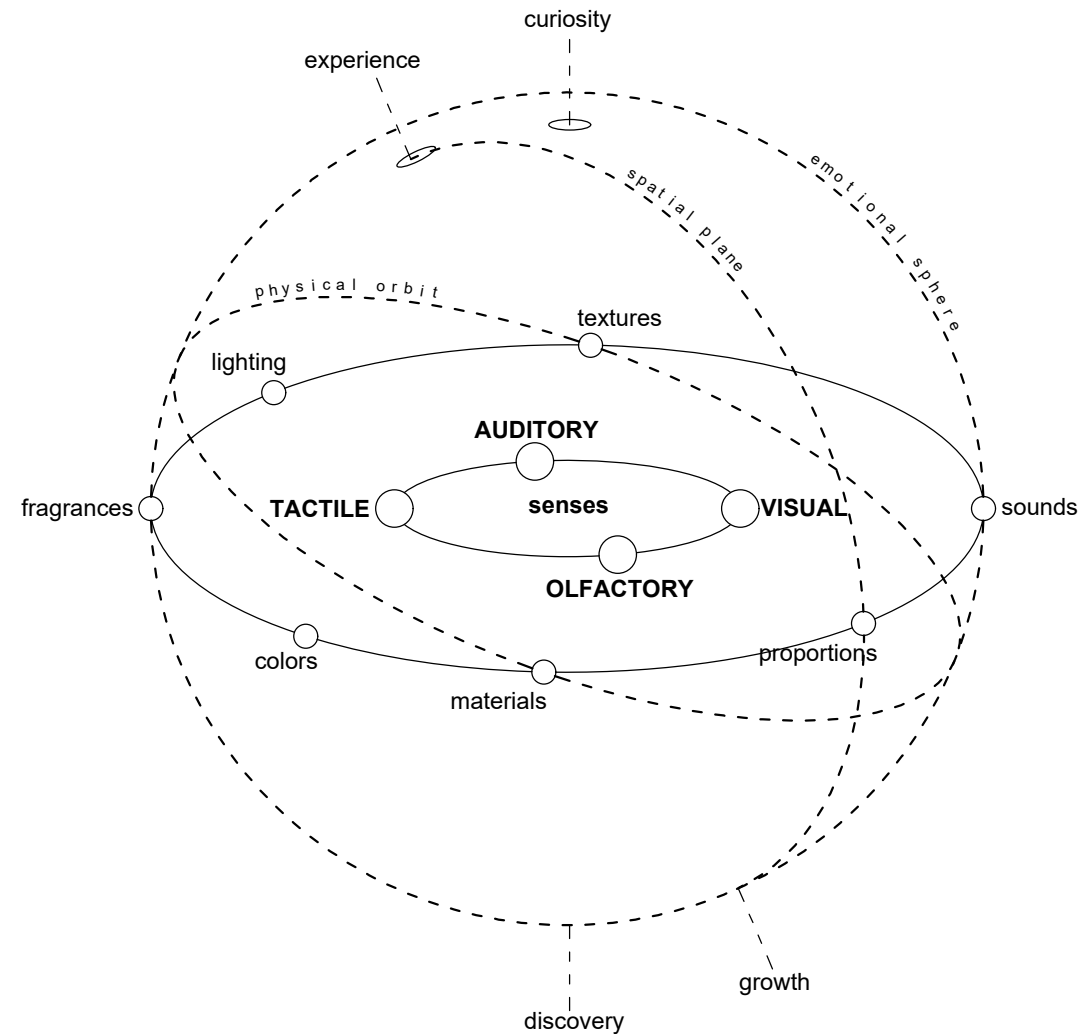


Figure 21. *Diagram of experience* by Marta Lulić

open layouts	fluidity, spontaneity, freedom
narrowing and widening hallways	movement, curiosity
labyrinthine pathways	exploration, mystery
contrasting spaces	dynamic, curiosity, dramatic, discovery
uncluttered, minimalist spaces	timelessness, clarity, harmony, serenity
organic forms, irregular angles, and non-linear paths	exploration, movement, curiosity
arches, colonnades, and vaulted ceilings	traditionality, locality
human scale and proportions	harmony, unity, approachable
blurred lines between interior and exterior	connection, belonging to the larger landscape
unconventional design	interesting, unknown
monumental scale	authority, dominance
large openings	connection, openness, inviting
natural light	openness, tranquillity
sunlit rooms	airy, welcoming
warm, golden light	coziness, comfort, security
dim lighting with shadows	introspection, quietness, stillness
dark spaces	distress, discomfort, disorientation
natural materials (wood, stone, terracotta)	warmth, comfort, simplicity, welcoming, coziness
rustic elements (terracotta tiles, wrought-iron accents)	authenticity, warmth, comfort
heavy, sturdy materials (stone, concrete, wood)	rootedness, stability, timelessness
soft, light materials (textiles, fabrics, linen, cotton)	warmth, coziness, security, comfort
smooth finishes (plaster, wood, concrete)	inviting, warm, calm
decorative elements (hand-painted tiles, mosaic)	authenticity, artistry, uniqueness
earthy tones (warm yellows, browns, rich greens)	natural, rustic, comforting, warm
bold hues (deep reds, ochres)	vibrancy, traditionality, sophistication
neutral shades (whites, light greys, beiges)	serene, timeless, welcoming
vibrant colour palettes (orange, red, blue)	joyfulness, playfulness
natural sounds (water, rustling leaves, breeze)	calming, soothing
background music and countryside noises	awakened, lively, immersive
quiet sounds	stillness, cozy, security, tranquillity, isolation
loud sounds	overstimulation
essential oils	relaxation, calmness
fragrant plants and herbs (oleander, cypresses, basil)	connection, freshness
fresh-cut flowers	freshness, warmth

# 05 ATLAS

DIAGRAMS  
GLOSSARY



## FRAMEWORK

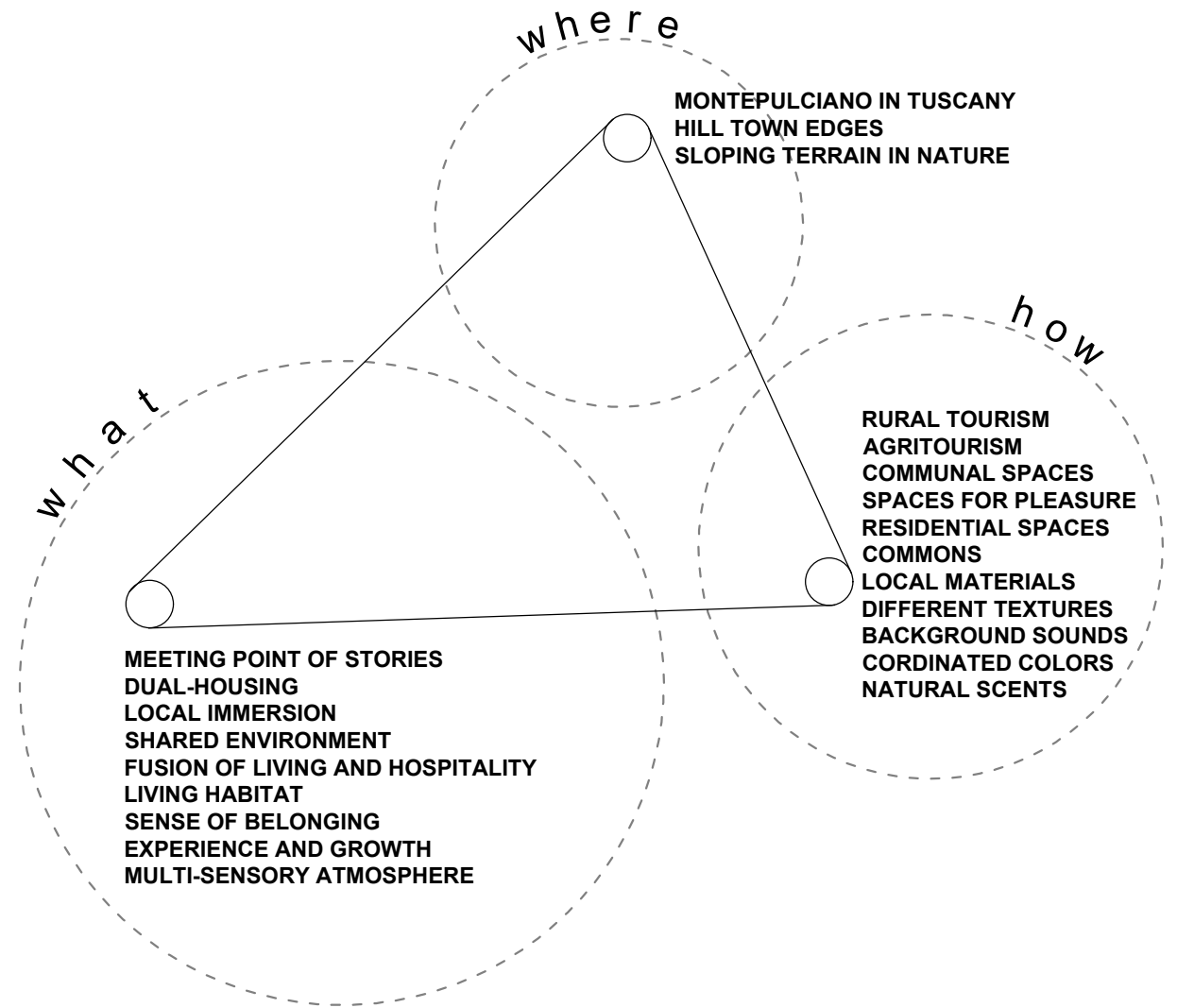


Figure 22. by Marta Lulić

# KEY THEMES

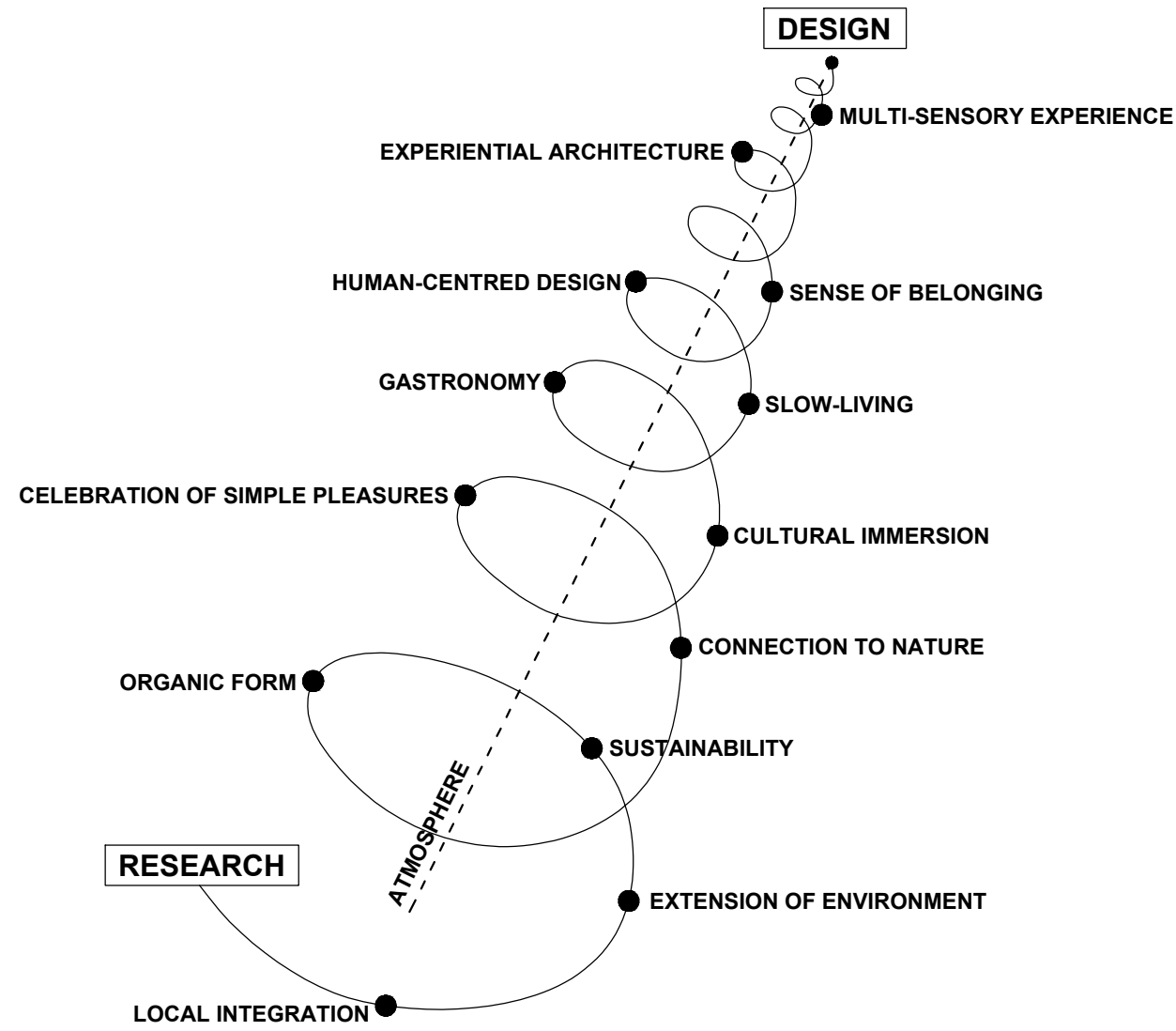


Figure 23. by Marta Lulić

# GLOSSARY



Figure 24. by Marta Lulić

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