DESIGN FOR MY WEBSITE

www.ri-genera.it – Andrea Minchio - Italy
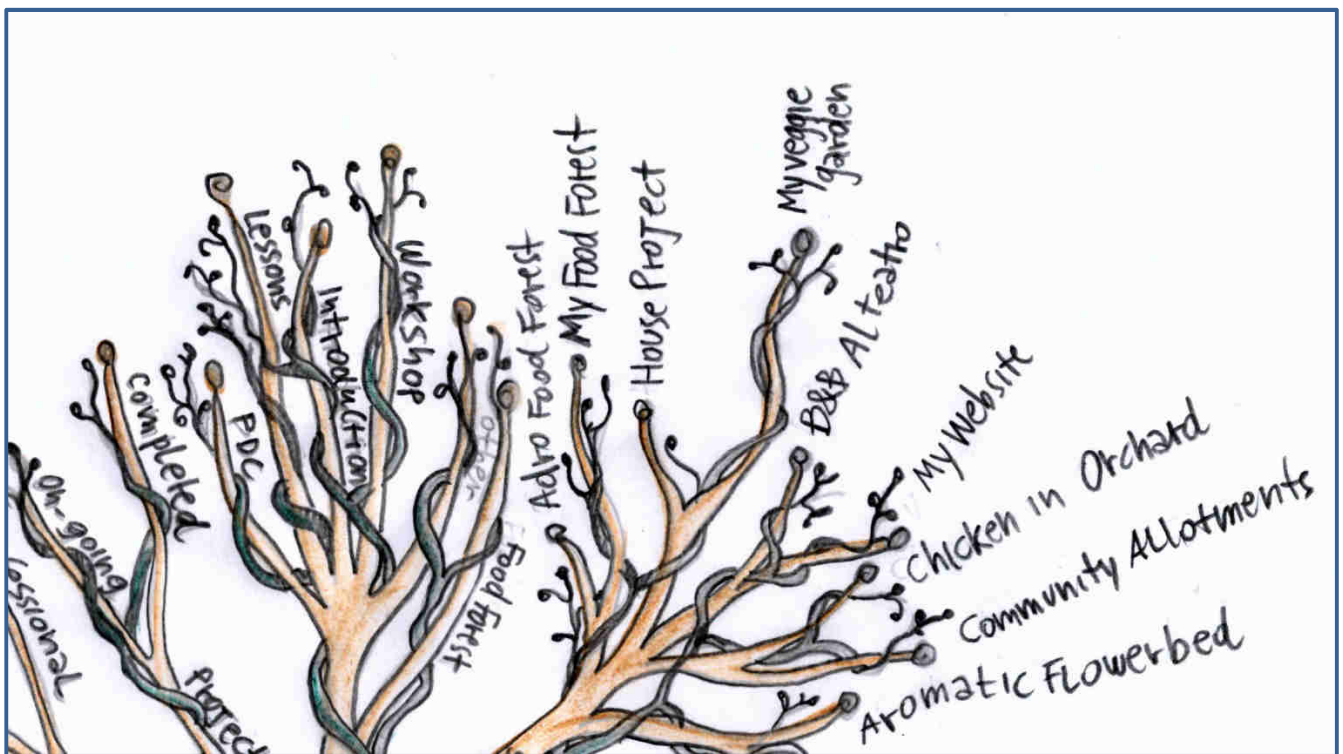
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Summary

I   INTRODUCTION

This is a design for my website, with this tool I would like to have visibility in order to inform and to show to potential clients or employers, what I can offer and what I do within permaculture, natural agriculture, regenerative agriculture and design.

The design will help me to decide what kind of solution is the best for the realization of the web site but will also help me to decide the structure of the site and the contents of the different pages.

The design framework chosen for this design is the **C.E.A.P.: C**ollect, **E**valuate, **A**pply, **P**lan.

Figure 1: Projects page of the web site with the description of one of the project: a 5000 square meters family homestead.

I.1   PERMACULTURE ETHICS

EARTH CARE

The realization of the website itself will not directly take care of the earth, but it will be a tool to find possible clients interested in developing a land project which will be based on the regeneration of the soil or could inform users on different permaculture projects and maybe create curiosity and interest.

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PEOPLE CARE

At the beginning I have decided to realize by myself the website. This make me feel proud of myself, increase my technical skills and also improve my design skills. After this experience I feel I can deal with experience never tried before and this make me feel good.

FAIR SHADE

In relation with fair share, I see the possibility to share to friends the learned tools and to help them to create their own website.

I.2   PERMACULTURE PRINCIPLES

OBSERVE AND INTERACT:

Before planning and designing the website frame and connections I have observed several web sites looking for both: the more clear way to show information and the use of colors in order to be interesting and easy to read and access. I also look for a clever way to inform with only a quick look.

OBTAIN A YIELD

The web site will inform the users about my skills and will also aim to find some clients both for the educational and for the professional part (clients).

DESIGN FROM PATTERNS TO DETAILS:

For the organization of the pages I will use the pattern of the tree.
The mail trunk will be the Homepage while the brunches will be the pages, the secondary menus within pages will be represented by the second order brunches and so on.

INTEGRATE RATHER THAN SEGREGATE:

In the home pages there will be all the connections to all the pages of the website; in each page there will be a logical connection to other pages. The Portfolio page will contain all the 10 portfolios of the Diploma.

I.3   DESIGN TOOLS

- CEAP
- Zones
- Client Interview
- PMI
- Planning for real
- Six thinking hats

II   COLLECT

NEEDS, WANTS AND VALUES

NEEDS	WANTS	VALUES
Logo Modify images and text by myself To have a useful site/tool To find clients for consultancy To find people interested in courses To show what I do To show Portfolios Mailing list	Double language (ENG and ITA) Newsletter Clear and simple to navigate Big changing images in the Home page 3 division with short information and connection to: Facebook, Events and courses	Open source platform if possible

To collect information and ideas for this design I navigated into the web looking for interesting websites relate or not to permaculture and to look at these site in order to get some useful ideas.

One of the site that I like the structure of is the *yogaravenn*a.com web site, it is clear, with the information well exposed. Some picture moves in order to entertain the visitor.

III   EVALUATE

FUNCTIONS, SYSTEMS and ELEMENTS

FUNCTIONS	SYSTEMS	ELEMENTS
To find clients for consultancy	Advertising	Stamp Cards Stamp Leaflets Distribute Leaflets
	Show ongoing projects	Dedicated page Facebook
	Organise Events	In Facebook During openings, or during public events
Logo (Name, character, colors)	Graphic Designer	Organise a meeting Email
Clear and simple to navigate	Good design process	Collection of information Evaluation of Needs and Wants Application of Permaculture principles Planning and realisation
	Use of the right web-design rules	Good balance between colors and styles Smooth characters Text box, images and elements in the right ratio
Usefulness	Show portfolios	A dedicated page Downloadable files in pdf format Clear and well organised portfolio in the dedicated page
	Network	Create mailing list Newsletter Facebook Courses

		Workshop
8		Lessons
	Show what I do	Facebook
		Courses page
		Newsletter
	Double language	Website in English
		Website in Italian

IV   APPLY

PAGES

1. **HOME**: The Home page will be the zone 0, in this page there will be all the connections to the other pages of the website and to the Facebook page/profile. There should be the presentation of me and the description of the services I can do and to whom the services are offered.
2. **PERMACULTURE**: In this page there will be a description of what is the permaculture, the application fields, some hints on ethics and principles and some links.
3. **PORTFOLIO**: In this pages I will put all the designs developed for the Diploma in Applied Permaculture. I will also prepare a downloadable form for every design/project in pdf format.
4. **CURRICULA**: There will be a part related with the education background and one related to the professional education.
5. **CONTACTS**: All the necessary information to find and contact me.
6. **COURSES**: In this page there will be the description in detail of the offered courses. All the scheduling, the context in which the course will take place, the costs, etc…
7. **PROJECTS/WORKS**: All the completed projects.
8. **FACEBOOK**: Facebook page, in this zone I will post all the ongoing projects, the coming events and courses, lots of photos, videos and descriptions. I will also describe courses I have attended to, new projects and designs. The Facebook page will have a direct connection to the Home page of the website.

In addiction there will be:

A **MAILING LIST**: the visitors of the website will be invited to join the mailing list of the website in order to receive information, news, contacts or to communicate.

A **NEWSLETTER**: the collection of all the news related to my professional activity which will be mailed to the interested users in the mailing list.

ZONES

There are different ways to consider the zone definition. One way is to consider the operation (update, uploads, editing, etc…) I will do on a specific page. The second way is to consider the zone from the user/visitor point of view, for example which is the most visited page and also how the visitor distribute the navigation time in the different pages of the website.
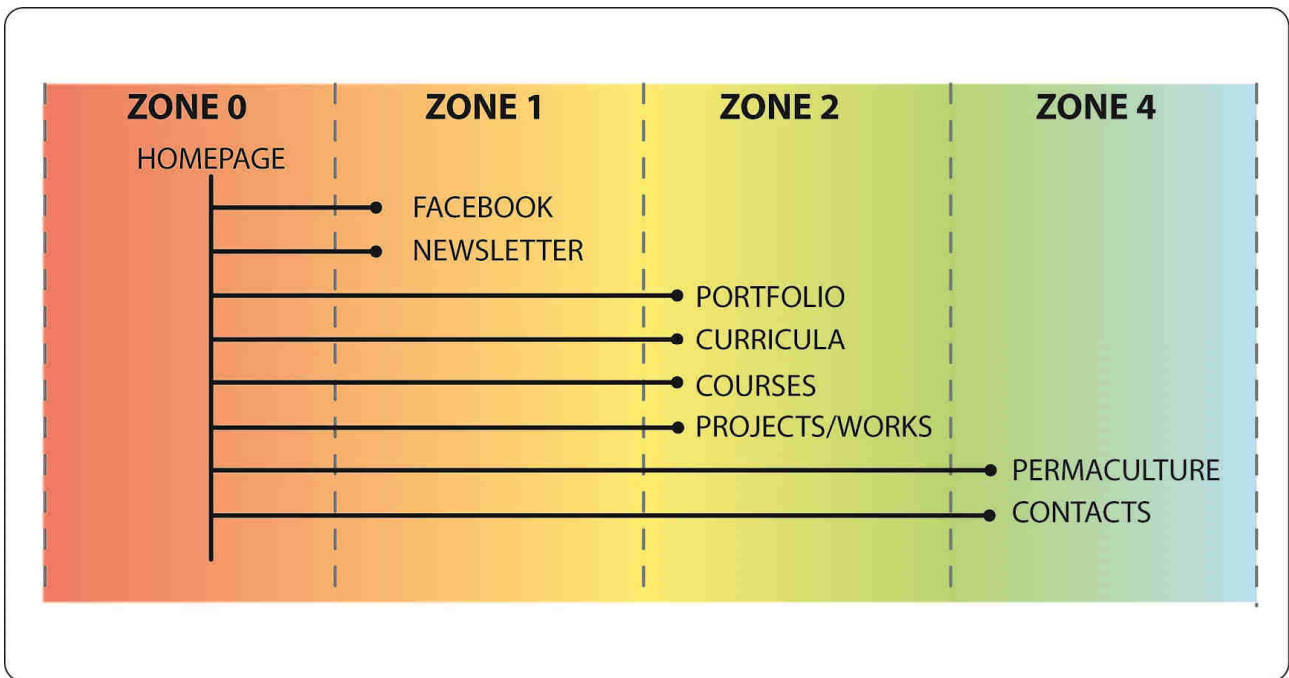

Figure 2: The pages of the website and the zone from the site manager point of view.
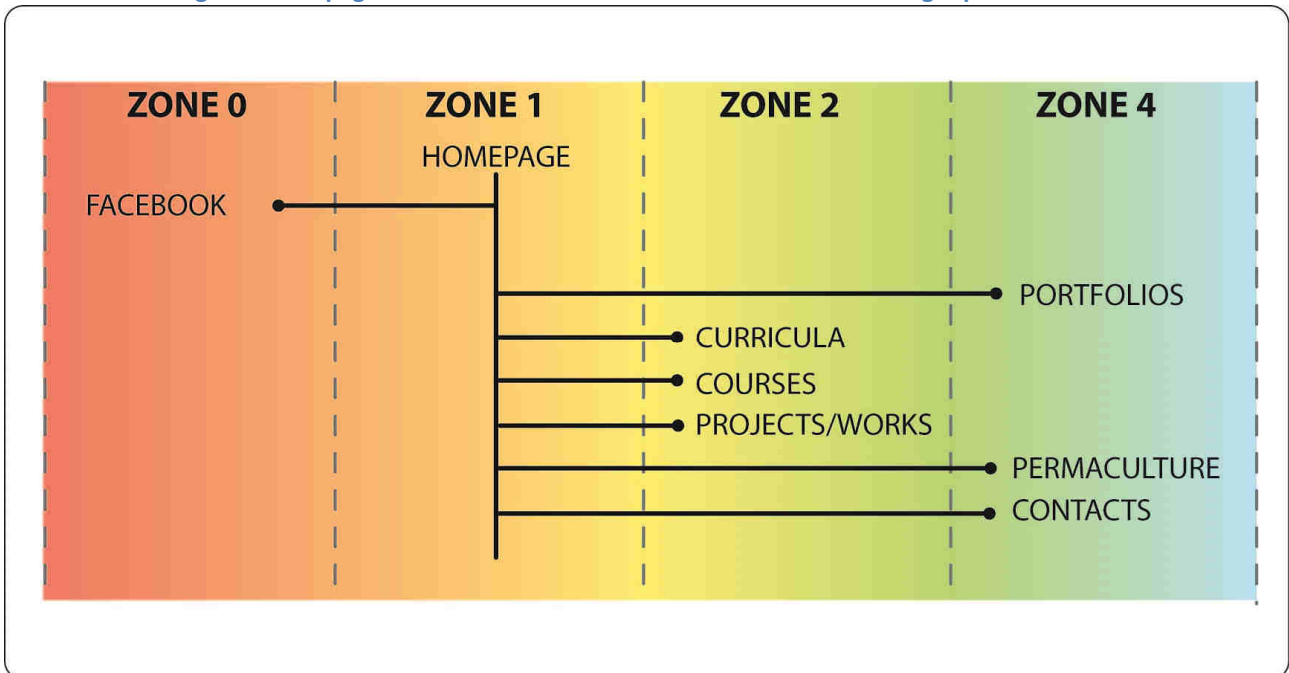

Figure 3: The pages of the website and the zone from the user point of view

The two approaches may also be, in some cases, the same, let's have a look:

Zone 0:

OWNER POINT OF VIEW	USER POINT OF VIEW
This will be the page I update almost every day Home page	This will be the most visited page or the page on which the visitor spend the majority of his time during the website navigation. Facebook

Zone 1:

OWNER POINT OF VIEW	USER POINT OF VIEW
Pages I have to update may be 2-3 times a week. Facebook, Newsletter	Pages visited during almost every website visit, but just to check if something has changed. Homepage

Zone 2:

OWNER POINT OF VIEW	USER POINT OF VIEW
Pages I have to update may be 2-3 times a month. Portfolio, Curricula, Courses, Projects/Works	Pages visited during almost every website visit, but just to check if something has changed. Courses, Projects/Works, Curricola

Zone 4:

OWNER POINT OF VIEW	USER POINT OF VIEW
Pages I don't have to update. Permaculture, Contacts	Pages visited only during the first visit of the website or only if needed. Permaculture, Contacts, Portfolio

A few words also on the visitors. I can image at least two kind of visitors, those interested in the ongoing initiatives (like courses, projects update, workshops, lessons, etc…) which will be much more connected with the Facebook page, and the clients, which will be much more interested in the website navigation, in particular the home page, the project page, the contacts but also the permaculture page.

THE WEB SITE

To realize the website I can choose from two different option:

1- I can go to a professional website designer and ask for a personal website, decide with her/him the structure of the site, check the possible solution and at the end pay for the service.
2- I can try to build it myself.

To better decide what to do I will do a PMI.

PMI (Plus, Minus and Interesting)

	PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING
Professional service	The site will be made at a professional level Everything will work	It is quite expensive I don't have a Plan-B	
I create the site my self	In the first stage I don't need to pay anything I can do all the attempts I need I have a Plan-B	I don't know the program and how to do it It will need more time	Learn how to build a websites If I understand that the realization is too much complicated I can switch to the Professional service I will get new skills I will be able to modify and update the website by myself in every moment.

I can say it was hard to choose. My more insecure and anxious part would choose to entrust to a professional consultancy, but the fact of not having economic resources and above all the chance to create the web site myself, convinced me to try to do it alone. With this solution I will also be able to add photos, documents and to update the site according to my needs.

WEBSITE FRAME AND CONNECTIONS

- CONTACTS
- CURRICULA
  - FORMATION
  - WORKS
- PROJECT/WORKS
  - ONGOING
  - COMPLETED
- FACEBOOK
- HOMEPAGE
- COURSES
  - PDC
  - WORKSHOPS/TALKS
  - FOOD FOREST
  - LESSONS
  - OTHERS
- PORTFOLIOS
  - Community Gardens - Lugo (RA)
  - My Food Forest - Ravenna
  - B&B At the Teatre - Ravenna
  - My Veggie Garden - Ravenna
  - Home Water - Ravenna
  - My Website
  - Aromatic Flowerbed - Ravenna
  - Chicken in Orchard - Ravenna
  - Collective Design for Permaculture Meeting
  - Patrizia field - Bagnacavallo (RA)
- PERMACULTURE

V   PLAN

VISION

My vision is connected to a tree with big roots (representing a strong connection to mother earth) with different brances (the pages of the website) and a climbing plant like a grape vine (the grape vine produce food, shade and connections) growing from the side of the tree and creating lots of connection between the tree brunces. I see my facebook page the right tool and the right service for creating the connection between the website and the user, visitors, clients, etc…
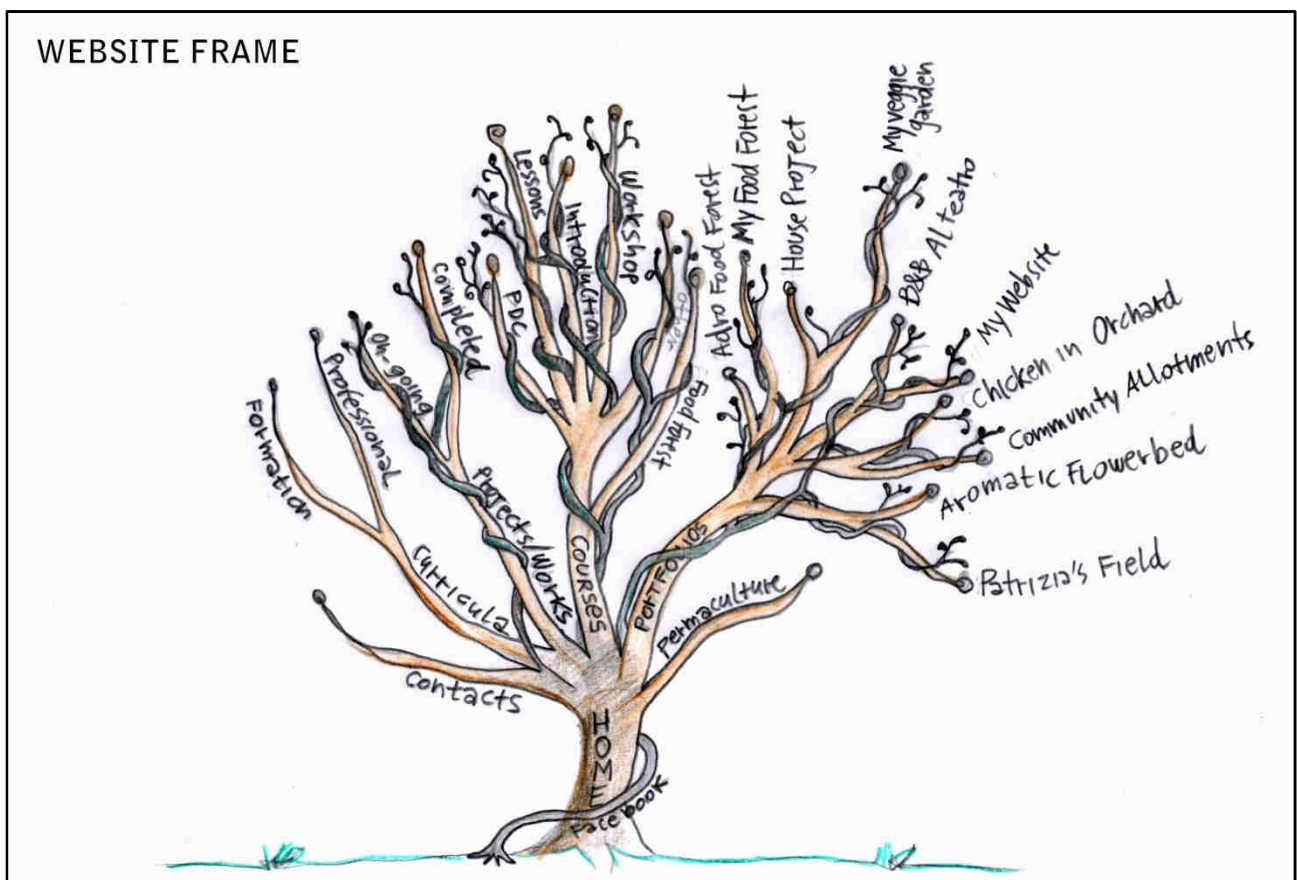
TIMETABLE

1. Collect photos and images for the website
2. Start to work at the page text
3. Buy a domain
4. Start to understand the website program and to get new skills
5. Start to create the website
6. Work on the logo

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7. Publish the website

COSTS

Domain: 10,00€/year
Website program: less than 20,00€
Logo creation: less than 300,00€

VI   IMPLEMENTATION

1. The collect image and photos phase has been crucial for the site development. In the era of appearance, images play a fundamental role, therefore I ask my wife, which is a good photographer to help me in taking some photos in the projects I am running to be able to implement the website.
2. The text of the pages should be short and precise, people don't like to waste time in reading and they prefer to jump to a different page or to look at images. To achieve this task I invest a lot of time in the review the text of every pages.
3. Some helps has been to use the list format and to add small images aside the text to add interest and obtain a yield.
4. I choose ARUBA for obtaining the domain because in the family we already have good experience with it.
5. I choose WEBNODE because it offer a set of tools to easy create pages using frames, using different format and different style. After every changes it is possible to see the result in the page. To choose the site editor I have thought at the tools which could have help me in the realization of the site and they were:
   a. A set of frame to choose from
   b. A sort of wizard which can help me during the process of creation and implementation
   c. The user-friendliness in adding images and text
   d. The cost of the service
6. The logo creation process started with a vision, the vision was a mix of what I has been, what I am and what I expect to be and to get or to obtain from a logo. In particular:
   a. I have a master in Environmental Sciences and since 2013 I am studying and applying permaculture in my life and in several projects land-based around the city where I live.
   b. I need a website to look for clients and to inform friends and clients of my courses and of my working projects.
   c. I have created a company call ri-genera that means regenerate and restore.
   d. With the company and the website I would like to inform people/clients that my mission is to design and project sustainable systems land-based (like garden, farms, homesteads), but also non land-based (like communities, associations, etc…) and to start from the regeneration of the earth and the people (earth care and people care are two of the three ethics of permaculture).

For the creation of the logo I have I have contacted a graphic designer and sent him my needs and wants using the client interview tool applied to the logo and also some sketches I draw by myself (Figure 4). The designer found the sketches and my visions and needs very useful for the realization of the logo. In the e-mail he answered me saying: "I also like the basic principle of your logo sketch a lot. It is playful and optimistic, conceptually it has all the important elements already in it: earth and soil, the spiral evolving up which reminds of the organic coil of a snail or a plant, friendly waving."

7. The implementation of the pages has been creative, often tricky and, from pages to pages I felt more competent. I like to think about images, logos, objects, text, how and where to add the images, which object was the right one for representing a subject, what kind of text, how to diversify the title from the paragraph, etc… At the same times this phase has been tricky, because I felt I wasn't able to decide, I was not satisfy by the results, etc…

    Follow the images of the website pages with some evaluation, unfortunately the text of the pages are still in Italian, and a double language version of the website has not yet been implemented.

HOME PAGE
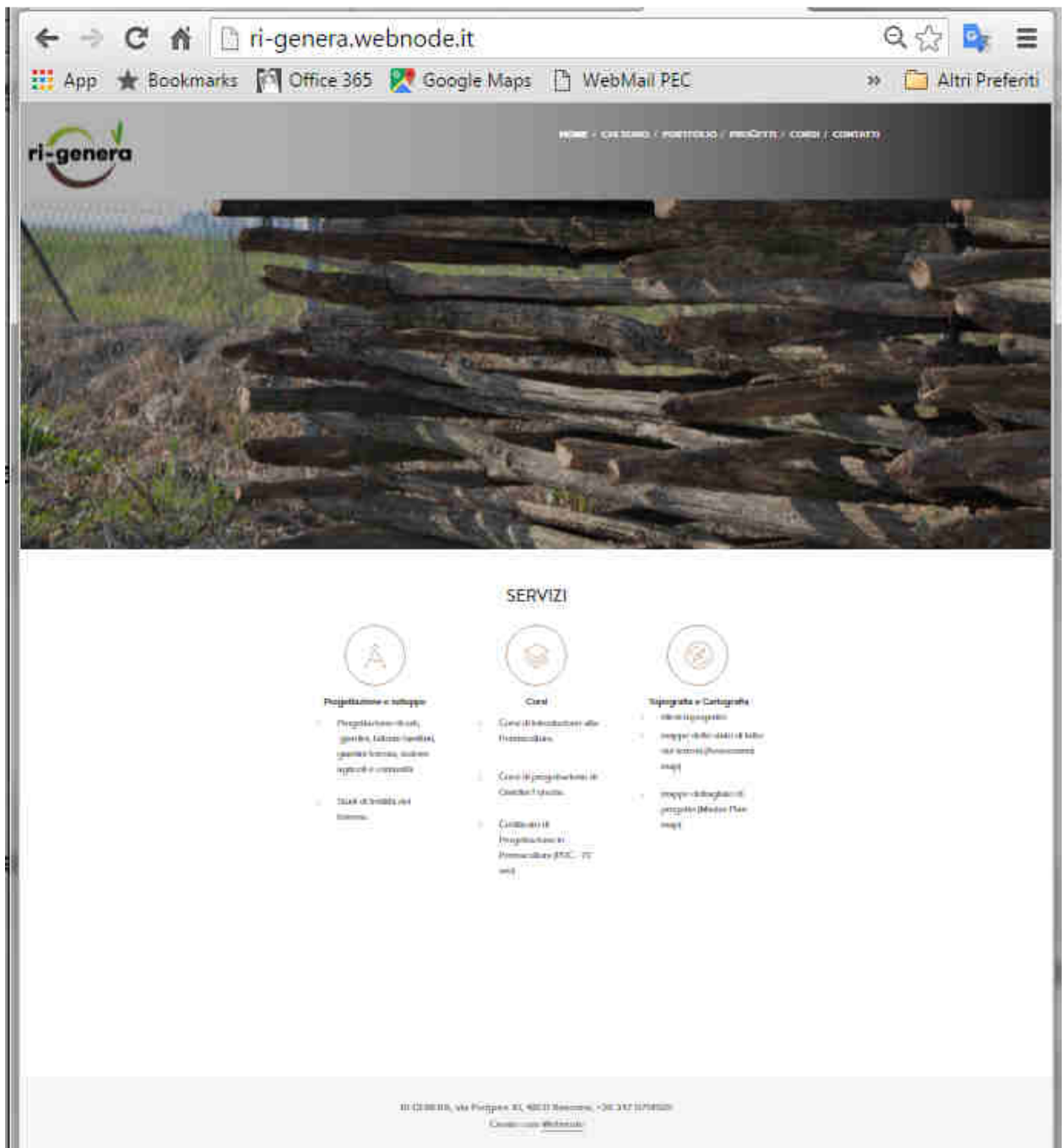
This is the Home page of the website. I use the PMI to identify what is good and what I don't like:

Pluses

- Clear and easy to read
- The services are in the center of the pages and readily accessible
- The links for the other pages are in the top right angle of the page and are accessible and easy to explore.

- The characters used
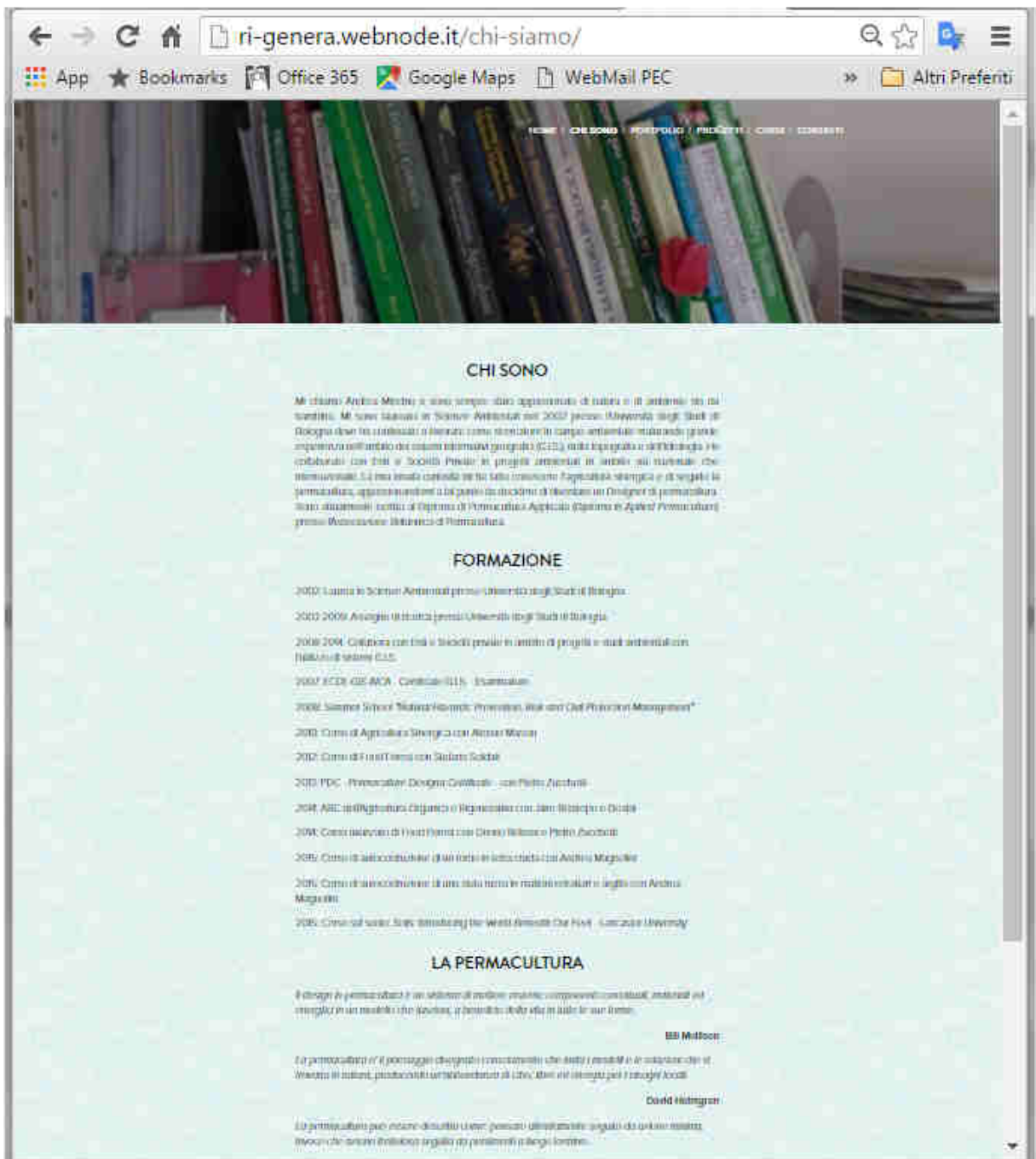
Minuses
- Image dark and shaded
- emotionally muted impression
- The logo is in the right position but it is not highlighted
- The band with the logo and the link is too dark
- No multiple language option

Interesting
- The objects which represent the different services.

WHO AM I

Pluses

- Clear and short description of my background
- The formation in list format
- Permaculture description
- The image is nice

Minuses

- Image dark and shaded
- emotionally muted impression
- No multiple language option

PORTFOLIOS

Pluses

- Clear and easy to read
- The portfolios are accessible and are all visible
- The image related to every portfolio attract user and visitor to open the portfolio.
- The portfolio can be downloaded and this is evident

Minuses

- Image dark and shaded
- emotionally muted impression
- No multiple language option

Interesting

- The portfolio has a link with map and therefore the project can be fine and explored also in maps.

PROJECTS

Pluses
- Clear and easy to read
- The image used create a good connection with the design.

Minuses
- Image dark and shaded
- There is only one project

Interesting
- The project map

COURSES
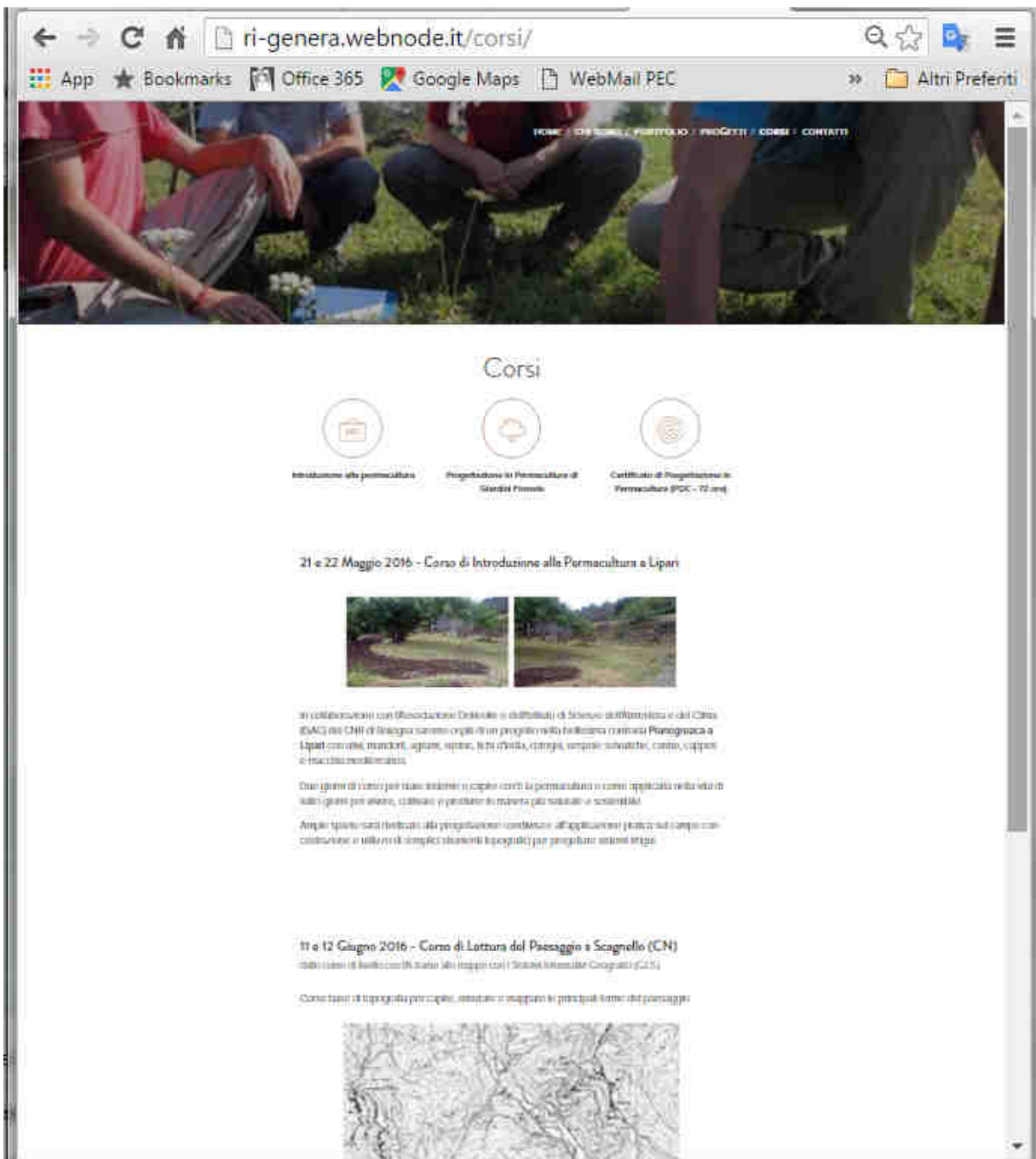
Pluses
- Clear and easy to read
- The courses are in the center of the pages and readily accessible
- The characters used

Minuses
- Image dark and shaded

- emotionally muted impression
- No multiple language option
- The courses are old and need to be updated

Interesting

- The objects which represent the different services.
- The images connected to the courses

CONTACTS
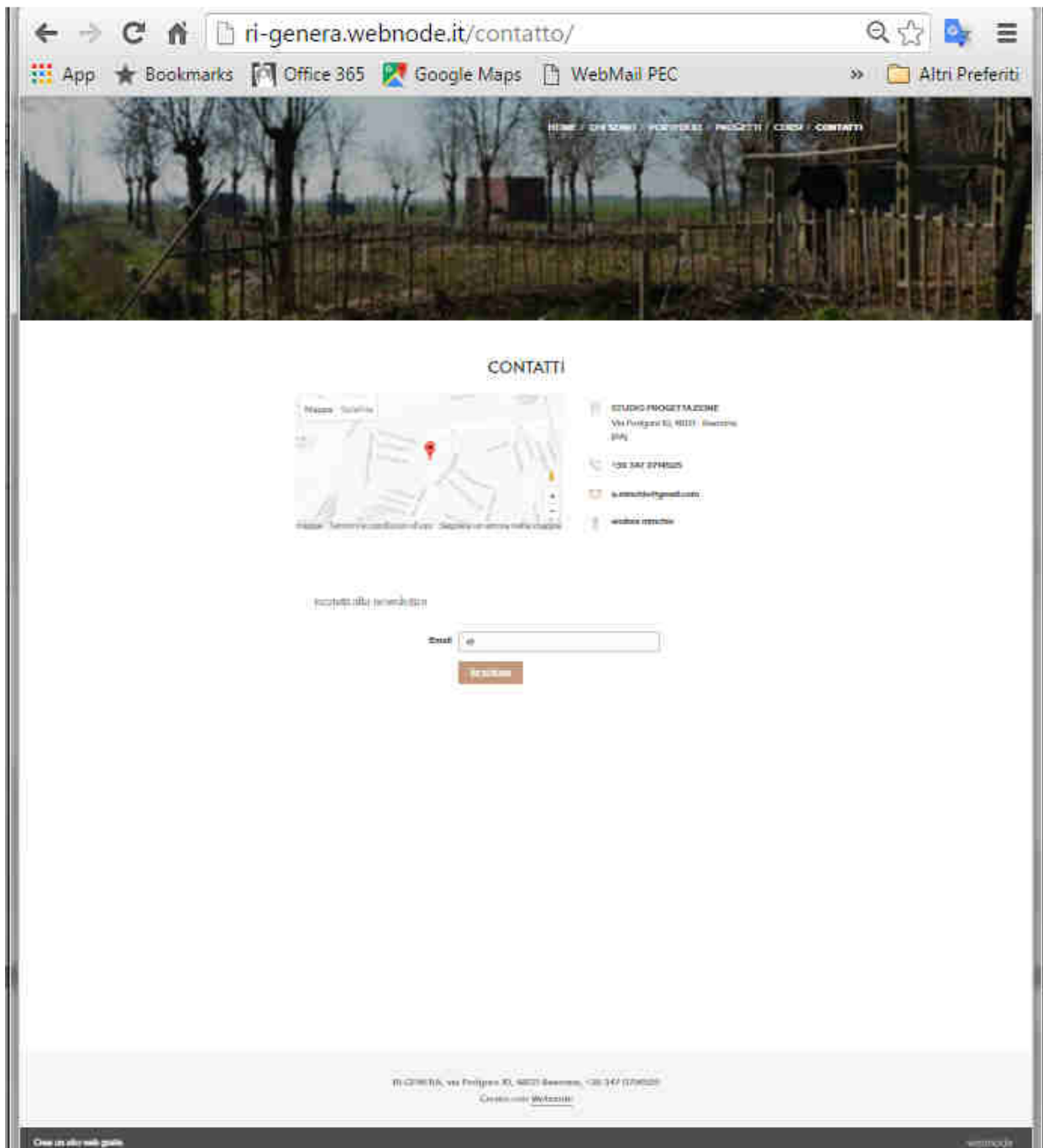
Pluses

- Clear and easy to read
- The courses are in the center of the pages and readily accessible
- The characters used
- There are all the necessary information

Minuses

- Image dark and shaded
- emotionally muted impression
- No multiple language option

Interesting
- Newsletter
- The map near the contacts

LIMITS

The overall limitation are connected to:
- the service I have used to create the page (WEBNODE). Webnode modify the images to fit in the page and the image result dark and shaded.
  With the basic access it is not possible to have the multiple language option.
- My point of view (too severe, too much precise and sometimes I have a negative approach at what I have done).

HELPS

- Ask for a consultancy (from a graphic designer to revisit the site aspect and move it in a different platform)
- Appreciate the page because I have created it myself with limitations but also with satisfactions
- Change the web creation service

VII   EVALUATION

The first thing I have chosen has been the FRAMEWORK. I have chosen the **CEAP** framework because I needed a pathway to follow and because I thought it could be a good framework to follow for this kind of design. I can say it is very basic and result in a major effort to be followed. In implemented projects it is necessary to add the implementation phase out of the plan part. And in case also the evaluation and tweaking.

I use **COLLECT** phase to have a look at some websites in the internet. There are off course millions of websites so I concentrate on permaculture sites. There are different kind of design type, there are site which offer services, others which offer courses, others sell stuff, tools of techniques. And some show projects, works and so on. From this research phase I was expecting to find suggestions for the design and realization phase of my website, but soon I realised that there were too many different information and so I have decided to design the site from my point of view taking into consideration my own visions. And my visions were: to create a website simple, with clear information (pages) easy to navigate.

To help me in the identifications of my needs and wants I have used the CLIENT INTERVIEW. This is a great tool and I have used a simplified tool that proved great for identifying needs and wants but it is not good enough in going much deeper into the client and the project background. Because of this reason recently I have decided to update and modify the structure of the client interview using the scheme described from Aranya in his book "*Permaculture Design a step-by-step guide*". During a client interview for a project relating to the requalification of a touristic area along the beaches of Lido di Dantes town, near Ravenna, it helped me a lot in understanding what was the background of the clients, what was their visions and values, if they really have limitations and what kind of limitation was, why they wanted to do that kind of project and how was the current arrangement of the site.
This to say that for this kind of project the simplified Client Interview has been a good and useful tool but maybe because I was the client and I know my backgroud. I could have applied a more detailed interview to analyze wants and needs of clients and/or employees interested in my services. This could be a matter for an incremental design.

In the Evaluate phase I have used the FUNCTION-SYSTEM-ELEMENTS tool which help me in the identification of the functions based on my needs and wants and also to write and see the necessary system to achieve functions, it also helped me in identifying the connection

between systems (the website and my facebook page, for example) and also the identification of different functions for a single solution.

From this phase I also realized that I need a **LOGO** and that a professional designer was necessary for making my ideas and visions into action. Therefore I have contacted a graphic designer and sent him my needs and wants using the client interview tool applied to the logo and also some sketches I draw by myself. The designer found the sketches and my visions and needs very useful for the realization of the logo and for the logo to express and show my values related.

The **APPLY** phase started with the identifications and description of the website pages. I use to take ideas and inspiration from the analyzed websites. With the ideas gathered during the first hase of observation I was than able to add information and description to the pages.
At this stages I used the ZONE tool to help me in the organization of the pages. I find this tool useful because it helped me in understanding which of the pages are the most viewed. In addiction I decided to change the point of view and I use the ZONE tool to analyse the pages from the user point of view. That was great because the visualization criteria were different. I also realized that I was creating a site for the user and not for myself, that has been a turning point in the design process. On the other side when it has been time to create the pages I realized that some crucial pages was missing (for example the personal description).
To decide to create the website by myself or by asking the help of a professional designer I use the PMI tool. It helped me in taking the final decision, that has been to try to do it by myself. In particular the INTERESTING phase of the tool has proved decisive for the final choice. Four points in the Interesting phase became reasons to choose for the second option, which also has resulted in going against my more insecure and anxious part of the character.
The CONNECTION tool helped me in finding, graphically, the connections between pages and also to clarify the structure of the web site for me and eventually for others if necessary in the future (for example a website designer).
After the publication of the site I ask some friends to view the site and give me their feedback
Here are some of them:
OVERALL IMPRESSION: nice, easy to read, light and comprehensive, "Your website already looks very good and gives a clean and friendly overview".
WHO AM I: change the photo of yourself, change the order of the phrases describing the meaning for permaculture

PORTFOLIO: should be nice to click on the images to make them bigger, open the project to read it

PROGECTS: Add more projects, same as above

COURSES: ok

CONTACTS: add Facebook

The suggestion and feedback has been very useful, I immediately add missing elements, modify images and functions.

The lesson learnt from this design has been to be able to apply permaculture principles to a non-land based project. I think that being able to switch from different kind of projects and designs is a crucial point for a permaculture designer.

When I started to create the site I realized that I had underestimated many aspects of the IMPLEMENTATION phase (text character, text dimension, color of the text, structure of the page, position of the images, images selection, etc..). However, having the general pattern of the design helped me to easily add the detail during the realization (design from pattern to detail); this make me think about the design phase and if it was possible to design also the details during the design phase. I think 50% of the detail could be added during the design phase while the rest was directly connected to the realization phase.

After few months of site use I have now decided to ask for the professional consultancy for the creation of a more professional website with more options, links, languages, etc… This was an option in the design and now I know that being able to try to do it myself was very useful to me. I have learnt how to do it, I have put my ideas into action by deciding many details and at the end I am proud of myself.

VIII   REFLECTION

To reflect on the overall process I will use the 6 thinking hats tool.

WHITE HAT: the site is on-line, it is simple, clear and work well. The pages are clear well organised and need to be updated and completed. The information within the pages are easy to follow, the portfolios and the projects can be explored in detail. The graphic are nice and well implemented in the pages.

RED HAT: I like the big images in the pages, they communicate a sense of relax but are a bit darker. I like the object standing on the services, they are simple and expressive. The

small images representing the portfolios are great, they communicate the sense of every project with just a view, and it is possible to enlarge the images with a click or to download the full design. Same with the project page even if it is necessary to add some more projects to it. The courses page is nice the images are communicative and the text is essentials but need updating.

BLACK HAT: the images are too dark and shaded and offer an emotionally muted impression. The website is still in Italian and I need it to be in English too. Some pages are not yet complete and need updates. I still don't have new courses scheduled.

YELLOW HAT: the website already looks great and gives a clean and friendly overview. It is simple, with nice images and a great logo!

GREEN HAT: to add the second language I can ask a friend of mine which is a website designer and ask him to do some changes, in this way the images will be less darker and the pages more professionals. I already have the images and text to add in the project page so it won't be a problem.

BLUE HAT: To keep the website active and alive it is necessary to update it as often as possible, new photos, new images, new courses and new project. to improve the website and make it more professional a help from a professional designer is needed.

The six thinking tool has helped me in visualizing the website from different point of view, let me see what went well and what went wrong, let me see my feeling in navigating the site, let me think about future steps. It is similar to the 4 question tool but more creative.

This is my first non-land based design and at the beginning I found some difficulties to switch my way of thinking from the land to the non-land design. The hardest part was to transpose the concepts normally applied to the design of a land in a more ethereal sphere, the sphere of the internet. But after a while I started to find several connection between the "real world" and the website structure and designing became easier.

With this design I increase my design skills because I have to adapt tools and procedure to a less explored world (the non-land based design). I also prove to myself to be able to create a website by myself and I could also give suggestion to those needing.
I enforce my skill in mapping by creating maps for analyzing and designing pages and I also increase my creativity with the implementation of the pages.

Now I feel able to offer a consultancy also on non-land-based design to friends and also clients.

Top tip for designing a website:
- Observe websites in the network and take notes of what you like most;
- Define pages, elements and connections in the pages;
- Design from the administration point of view but also from the visitors point of view;
- Use great images;
- Use short description;
- Use friends feedback for making tweakings;
- Try to create a website as clear and easy to read as possible