

ARDE - Outdoor Lamp

Regione Toscana - Comune di Minucciano (Lucca)



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Project Overview

ARDE is the concept of an outdoor lamp born from the intersection of contemporary design and cultural heritage. Inspired by the rich folk traditions of Minucciano, the lamp pays tribute to an ancient ritual that still sparks the collective imagination: the **Natalecci**. This evocative ceremony takes place annually on the night of December 24th, when the village of Gorfigliano comes alive with spectacular bonfires steeped in symbolic meaning.

The ARDE lamp honors this cultural legacy with an evocative and refined design. Its form deliberately echoes the shape of juniper berries and chestnut poles, both essential in the construction of the Natalecci. Designed for outdoor use – such as along the picturesque shores of **Gramolazzo Lake**, as shown in the picture – it emits a warm, enveloping light reminiscent of ritual bonfires, conveying a sense of welcome, continuity, and protection.



Problem Statement

Promoting sustainable tourism in the Minucciano area of inner Tuscany builds on the regeneration and valorisation of all existing points of interest, including the Gramolazzo lake. This artificial basin created in the 1950s at the service of a hydropower plant, has been recently targeted by public investments (cycling lanes, picnic areas, artificial beaches, etc.) to improve its attractiveness for the general public.

Turbulences

- Absence of a lighting infrastructure prevents from a more extended fruition of the lake environment, notably in the evenings/nights.
- Lighting installations must be made with natural and/or recyclable materials, to preserve the appearance of the site and send a coherent message to visitors.
- More than 70 years of disconnection between the lake (considered as an industrial infrastructure, not even for public use) and the population, suggest leveraging on historical traditions and cultural heritage.

Bold Vision

To visibly evoke Minucciano's Natalecci ritual with an original solar powered lighting system, composed of marble made structures, shaped as juniper berries and chestnut poles, similar to the bonfires of the ancient tradition, to be placed all along the shores of the Gramolazzo Lake. This innovative infrastructure, beside ensuring night time fruition of the promenade and its surroundings, will help strengthen local identity, foster community engagement, and promote sustainable tourism.

Where We are Now:

The ARDE concept is authored by Carolina Fioretti and Amira Eldhazawy, both students at the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence (DiDA)

At the NEB Festival held in Gramolazzo on 14 June 2025 the idea was ranked 3rd among all participants.

Pilot status: now in its prototyping phase

How did we get here?

II semester 2024:

- a B4M local node was created in Minucciano, with the involvement of 4-Helix stakeholders.
- thanks to an agreement between the Tuscany Region and DiDA, a group of international students was engaged in an idea contest, after a study visit onsite.

I semester 2025:

- all concept designs were presented to the local population in a public event and then voted by a jury of experts (weighted 60%) as well as by the citizens themselves (weighted 40%) through a combined online and offline polling system.

II semester 2025:

- private funds were mobilised to support the prototyping phase.

What if...

What if...

As a **Visitor**

I could **experience the Natalecci ritual's atmosphere every evening, not only on December 24th**

With **warm, bonfire-like lighting, interpretive signage, and occasional live rituals**

So that **evening accessibility, safety, and cultural legibility of the landscape are significantly improved**



Who will benefit?

Target Groups

- **Urban planners** could deploy a coherent lighting strategy around Lake Gramolazzo that links sites and narratives
- **Private funders** could seed an installation that proves heritage led placemaking also delivers measurable returns
- **Tourists** could feel the warmth and story of the Natalecci any night they walk the shores of the lake
- **Local residents** could reclaim the lakeside as a safe, meaningful meeting place for all ages
- **Designers/artists** could translate ritual language into a series of site-specific light works
- **The Municipality of Minucciano** could catalyze a night time economy without heavy infrastructure costs
- **Conservationists** could protect nocturnal ecology while enhancing human use
- **Tourism operators** could offer curated, low-impact night experiences that tell a local story

Key Learnings

ARDE translates a local ritual into a functional object that connects heritage, place-making, and sustainable technology, proving that design can both honor tradition and activate underused landscapes.

Successful cultural translation requires visible, respectful cues rather than literal replication.

A careful use and respectful integration of natural materials (marble) with modern technology is essential to balance human experience with ecological sensitivity.

Pilot installations at different scales (small and large units) allow testing of siting, durability, and user behavior before wider rollout.

Measuring social uptake (attendance, local business impact) will help validate cultural and economic benefits.

NEB Values

Beautiful – Ambition: To Evoke

- ARDE translates the Natalecci's symbolic forms into a refined marble and warm-light language, creating a poetic, site-specific aesthetic that resonates emotionally with place.

Sustainable – Ambition: To Save

- ARDE runs on solar panels, warm spectrum LEDs, durable materials, and a modular, serviceable design to minimize energy use, maintenance, and ecological impact.

Together – Ambition: To Unite

- The lamps act as shared focal points that foster intergenerational transfer, cultural participation, local stewardship, and social cohesion.



NEB Working Principles

Participatory Process **Ambition: To Engage**

- 4-Helix Stakeholder Involvement
- Consultation of the Local Population
- Heritage-driven Design

Multi-Level Engagement **Ambition: To Liaise**

- Local B4M Node as starting point & network hub
- Regional Government as prime motor (with B4M)
- Now building links with the European NEB hub

Transdisciplinarity **Ambition: To Merge**

- Professionals from multiple sectors/disciplines
- Young and seasoned designers
- Infrastructure with folklore, industry with tourism

Common Themes

- Living with landscape and natural materials
- Rituals of light, seasonality, and collective memory
- Craft, symbolism, and contemporary reinterpretation
- Outdoor sociality and the culture of shared public space
- Solar resilience and climate adaptation



Lessons Learned



- The project revealed that heritage driven design can carry far more social and territorial weight than expected, especially in a rural context where symbols matter as much as infrastructure.
- Implementation challenges do exist and are emerging along the way, across the design, technical and social dimensions.

Sharing for the Future

What knowledge can contribute to the B4M Toolbox

Place-based design knowledge

- How to translate local rituals and symbols into contemporary design without folklorizing them.
- How to work with local stone, wood, and craft traditions in ways that respect both heritage and modern fabrication.
- How to design for outdoor sociality, where public life extends into evenings and across seasons.

Heritage as a driver of regeneration

- How a single symbolic object can activate memory, identity, and belonging.
- How to pair physical design with ritual-based programming (e.g., micro rituals, seasonal gatherings).
- How to involve elders, artisans, and cultural custodians in co-design.