

The Table of Alliance

The tapestry (12 metres by 2) is a personal elaboration of the 23 chromosomes present in the map of the human genome. A detail of each chromosome is seen in close-up, a 'zoom' shot of a particular region of interest (in the order of 100 megabytes) that highlights a particular genetic structure and the sequencing of that given chromosomal segment enlarged one billion times. A gene with a particular function and involved in a particular disease has been chosen from each chromosome. In the case of chromosome 15, and its segment q25, for example, the highlighted gene is believed to be responsible for pulmonary cancer. The genome is a bond of communion for the human species, showing how every individual is similar and yet, at the same time, unique. These scientific and cultural premises are the birth-site of the *Table of Alliance* project, a performance involving the realization of a banquet for thirty-six guests seated around a table covered by the tapestry depicting this personal genomic map. The tapestry was hand-sewn, in the early months of 2014, by six women of different nationalities, all of them inmates in the female section of Rome's Rebibbia prison. A first banquet has been realized in the prison the 12th June 2014. A second banquet will take place over the following months in the square of Campidoglio, in Rome. Other performances are planned to take place in other squares around the world. The scientific information used to realize the map was taken from *e!Ensembl* (http://www.ensembl.org/Homo_sapiens/Info/Index), which produces a genome data base and makes the information available free and online. The graphic artist William Greco helped me in co-designing the tapestry and the geneticist Gianni Soldati contributed in identifying the genome (loci) highlighted in it. To the latter, I will now pass the turn.

Daniela Papadia

As a scientist I am involved in many different aspects of scientific research but my main focus is applied research, where the development of clinically useful products is the centre of my work. We look for single nucleotide polymorphisms involved in pathologies. DNA is a very long chain of single small units called nucleotides and each one has billions of these nucleotides chained together in a long spiral molecule called DNA. So, every individual of the human species is similar because of its DNA. Arms, legs, brain, heart, lungs, kidneys: everyone of us has one or a couple of these organs constituting the architecture of the human body, which is exactly written in genes. But if we look a little bit closer to the human being we start to see small variations, like the eye's colour, the pigmentation of the skin, the hair's colour which are due to variations in the sequence of our DNA. More than 4 millions of such small single variations are reported in every DNA molecule of every human being. This indeed represents the source of our biological variability. All human beings are similar and different and this paradox is the central aim of the work of Daniela Papadia. We are all different but still humans, and for scientists like me this is an extraordinary message to be given in a world where we easily tend to forget what we are and where we are coming from. In other words, there is enough scientific evidence to say that uniformity and difference are not a dichotomy anymore.

Gianni Soldati