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The management of cultural heritage and landscape in inner areas

edited by Mara Cerquetti, Leonardo J.
Sánchez-Mesa Martínez, Carmen Vitale

Guardo le canoe che fendono l'acqua, le barche che sfiorano il campanile, i bagnanti che si stendono a prendere il sole. Li osservo e mi sforzo di comprendere. Nessuno può capire cosa c'è sotto le cose. Non c'è tempo per fermarsi a dolersi di quello che è stato quando non c'eravamo. Andare avanti, come diceva Ma', è l'unica direzione concessa. Altrimenti Dio ci avrebbe messo gli occhi di lato. Come i pesci¹.

Quando cammino nei prati attorno al Santuario, quasi sempre solo, ripenso a nonno Venanzio che, da giovane biscino, pascolava il gregge negli stessi terreni. Mi affascina il fatto che in questo luogo la cui cifra, agli occhi di chi guarda adesso la mia scelta di vita, è la solitudine, nei secoli addietro abitassero oltre duecento persone. Ancora negli anni Cinquanta, ricorda mio nonno, erano quasi un centinaio gli abitanti di Casette di Macereto tra contadini, mezzadri, mogli, pastori e un nugolo di bambini che costringeva il maestro a salire ogni giorno da Visso per fare lezione a domicilio.

Era una comunità compatta, coordinata come lo può essere quella delle società operose degli insetti: api, formiche, termiti, ma cosa più sorprendente che mai, una comunità niente affatto statica o chiusa².

¹ Balzano M. (2018), *Resto qui*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 175.

² Scolastici M. (2018), *Una yurta sull'Appennino*, Torino: Einaudi, p. 50.

“Bones” and pathways. Transhumant tracks, inner areas and cultural heritage

Letizia Bindi*

Abstract

This paper represents the first systematization of an ethnography based on Molise in the framework of a wider interest in regional/national/global processes of heritagization and monitoring put in place in the last two decades, above all, but not exclusively, by the UNESCO framework, Council of Europe and other global contexts of conservation/valorization policies. The Region Molise, being small and relatively secluded, is particularly fit for advancing some methodological and theoretical issues.

The research is focused on bio-cultural heritage and transhumance/traditional pastoralism revitalization as a cultural/tourist path, especially in the inner regions of Northern Italy, but also in the South. Moreover, transhumance has recently been reconsidered as a new form of sustainable breeding activity and a very embedded practice in the local.

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Questo saggio è una prima sintesi di un'etnografia svolta in Molise nel quadro di un più ampio interesse per i processi di patrimonializzazione a livello regionale/nazionale/globale nell'ultimo ventennio, essenzialmente nel quadro, seppur non esclusivo, delle politiche UNESCO, del Consiglio di Europa e di altre cornici globali di salvaguardia e valorizzazione dei beni immateriali e materiali. Il Molise risulta per le sue dimensioni e per la relativa appartatezza, adatto ad osservare alcune dinamiche e avanzare alcune riflessioni.

La ricerca è incentrata sul patrimonio bio-culturale e in particolar modo sulla pratica della transumanza e del pascolo vagante rivitalizzati recentemente nel quadro di percorsi e cammini turistici, soprattutto in alcune aree interne e montane dell'Italia settentrionale, ma anche più recentemente in alcune zone del centro-meridione. Ancor più recentemente queste forme di pastorizia tradizionale sono state riconcettualizzate come espressione di un sistema di allevamento sostenibile e di pratiche rurali fortemente radicate nella località e come risorsa per lo sviluppo delle aree maggiormente periferiche e interne del Paese.

1. The debate on intangible cultural heritage

In the last 20 years, we registered a conspicuous increase of rules and projects on conservation, safeguard and valorization of bio-cultural heritage. The most part of these reflections and actions started in native communities facing the influence of the colonial and postcolonial governments and more generally of foreign capitals in development processes and territorial exploitation¹. According to these politics of acknowledgement, a shaper consideration of communities' instances on land ownership and participative management of resources has been developed, particularly for the inner and more peripheral regions of different Countries.

In Europe, the debate on a synergy between natural and cultural heritage is especially appointed on habitat and landscape conservation². This is happened, for instance, in European regions historically interested by transhumance: a productive and breeding practice which has deeply influenced social structures and ways of life of many people in the Mediterranean and European areas, their kinship relations, their symbols and settlements³. This research on transhumant pathways crossed, of course, the relatively recent debate in social sciences, landscape design and planning studies, rural economy and environmental studies on inner areas and their revitalization and development.

In Italy researches and policies have been realized and set up on safeguard and promotion of ancient pastoralist tracks and landscapes, on transhumance as a civilization and on relationships between pastoralism, agriculture and rural communities. Specific researches range from the Northern Regions of

¹ Maffi 2007; Rapport 2007; Bindi 2013.

² Settis 2002, 2012; Arminio 2017; Magnaghi 2003, 2005a, 2005b.

³ Delavigne, Roy 2004.

Alpine transhumance⁴ to the horizontal transhumance in the southern regions as Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia⁵. Vertical transhumance is widespread in many mountainous and inner regions of Italy, included Abruzzo, Molise, Campania and Basilicata. There are moreover interesting cases in the central regions of Italy – as the inner areas of Tuscany and Lazio⁶ – and in the islands as Sicily and Sardinia⁷. It is an ancient and strongly embedded practice, rooted since before of the Roman Empire, which influenced settlements and routes, territories and socio-cultural structures.

My research is focused on the secular system connecting the southern and inner regions of Italy to the coasts of the Puglia where cattle were conducted during the winter, particularly the area of Foggia where the Dogana della Mena delle Pecore (Sheep Douane) was settled during three centuries. Being today this system almost completely abandoned, my research is above all on “heritagization” processes of this system of breeding, on conservation policies and tourism exploitation of this bio-cultural heritage, through an ethnography particularly focused in Molise.

Molise was one of the Italian regions that was affected by this deconstruction of transhumant sheep-breeding: a productive practice that over the centuries has contributed to the formation of the social structures of the Mediterranean “pastoral life” world as well as of many other European areas, conditioning their kinship relationships, their symbols, their settlements. This form of breeding, selection and management of flocks and herds effectively contributed to the shaping of the landscapes in which it was practiced, has conditioned in a very relevant way family, social and power structures of the communities and it ended up representing the very notion of identity, although this is an ambivalent and controversial notion for social sciences.

2. National and regional regimes

The frame of conservation and valorization of transhumant tracks in Italy is redundant and it produced, especially in the last three decades, many rules, protocols and laws, but also a lot of informality and negligence on the level of practices. *Tratturi*, in fact, are protected areas since 1939 and consequently received new national and regional regulation in the Seventies and Eighties (1976, 1980, 1983)⁸. This legal framework set up the question of *tratturi* and

⁴ Viazzo 2001; Aime *et al.* 2001; Grasseni 2003; Salzman 2004.

⁵ Paone 1986, 1987; Petrocelli 1999; Cialdea 2007.

⁶ Barsanti 1987; Massaini 2005.

⁷ Meloni 1984; Angioni 1989, 2000; Padiglione 1989; Maxia 2006.

⁸ Law No. 1089 of the 1st of June 1939 upon the “Safeguard of artistic and cultural goods”; Decree of the 15th of June 1976 on public domains, explicitly mentioning the transhumance

transhumance as protected areas and landscapes and cultural heritage between national and regional competence implying sometimes a sort of indecision in the management of territories. In 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment set up the “National Coordinating Board on *Tratturi* and Transhumance Civilization”, in the frame of a sustainable action programme on Apennine areas. The aim was to define sites, itineraries, tangible and intangible cultural goods having historical, cultural, archaeological, economic and social relevance related to transhumance and sustainable development especially for the inner regions where depopulation, abandonment and economic depression were harder than it was in the areas that were declining towards the coasts.

At a regional scale, the legal framework in Molise has been shaped through different steps. The first regional law was dedicated to «conservation, valorization and management of *tratturi* as public domain»⁹ and it defined for the first time sheep-tracks as «a public good of relevant interest in historical, archaeological, natural and landscape terms, but also useful for the breeding activities»¹⁰. In this law the Region proposed the institution of a “Park of the *Tratturi* of Molise”. Provinces, Municipalities and Mountain Authorities were supposed to work together – in cooperation with the regional government – for the valorization and management of regional sheep-tracks through a specific fund. In 2005, another regional law specifically established the existence of a «regional transhumant heritage»¹¹ constituted «by tangible (natural, historical, archaeological) and intangible goods (ethnological, social, anthropological, economic) as well as the activation of a “Regional Board on *Tratturi* and Transhumant civilization”»¹².

Contemporarily, many national, regional and even European funds were obtained to provide adequate conservation, safeguard and enhancement of this natural and cultural heritage. In a dedicated report on Museums Systems in Italy in different Italian Regions it was noticed that, despite conspicuous funds on *tratturi* and transhumance, it was not possible to find really coherent and efficient policies at a local scale¹³.

networks of pastoral tracks of the Region Molise; Decree of the 20th of March 1980 on concessions allowed on transhumant roads and giving the possibility to municipalities to prepare a specific Strategic Plan on these territories; Decree of the 22nd of December 1983 extending the safeguard not only to the transhumant tracks of Molise, but also of Abruzzo, Puglia and Basilicata. Regional Directory Boards of Ministry of Cultural Goods are charged of the safeguard and valorization of transhumant networks since 1977 when the Presidential Decree No. 616 of the 24th of July established the transfer of competences from the State to the Regions even for this kind of conservation policies (art. 66).

⁹ Regional Law No. 9 of the 11th of April 1997.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Regional Law No. 19 of the 5th of May 2005.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ La Monica, Maggio 2009; Parisi 2013, 2017; Bindi 2017b.

An important reflexion on the different ways and “rhetorics” of the local resources has been developed through an increasing reference to communities’ participation and sharing issues. Researches on the relationships between parks, protected areas and eco-museums have recently shown how far community-based actions of conservation/valorization of environmental/cultural heritage and landscapes have been developed. In the ethnography conducted by Valeria Siniscalchi in the Park of the Écrins in the French Departement of Haute-Alpes¹⁴, we witness the strong commitment that local communities put in conservation/valorization processes as well as in territorial regeneration. In other ethnographies, we can observe how the community participation to local actions of development can start from the implementation of short food supply chain and responsible food consumers’ networks¹⁵.

Moreover, the theme is pivotal for what concerns landscape conservation, but also late-modernity re-articulation of alienation, loss of sense of belonging to the community, cultural and individual “apocalypses”¹⁶. While territory and locality are increasingly and necessarily exposed to dramatic wear and tear of sense, discourses on safeguard and conservation of landscape and local knowledge/practice systems seem to become stronger and more visible. They have received an extremely efficient endorsement in many global and supranational conventions that have given a framework for heritagizing thinking and processes. This is a huge dynamic according to which local and marginal communities are re-defining their self-representations, giving sense and name to notions as identity, environment, culture, value.

An example of this re-shaping of local identity and the consequent politico-ideological tensions is today represented by the revitalization and heritagization of transhumance and traditional pastoralism, but above all of the *Tratturi* (sheep tracks), which represent the environmental support no longer – or very partially – of regular seminomadic transfer of flocks, but essentially as cultural pathways for the discovery and tourist valorization of local rural territories.

3. *Politics and poetics of conservation/valorization*

The last ten years were characterized by regional actions (often conducted through the mediation of GAL – Local Action Groups or NGOs, i.e. Legambiente, Italia Nostra and so on) aiming at defining and protecting residual regional areas of transhumance and on mapping these places. Conservation and valorization of natural and cultural landscapes were very less systematic.

¹⁴ Siniscalchi 2008.

¹⁵ Grasseni 2014; Siniscalchi 2015.

¹⁶ De Martino 1977; Cirese 2003.

Nonetheless, scholars noticed how much agricultural and planning permissions were still given during this period despite the recommendations and prohibitions of the Regional Superintendence for Cultural Heritage. In 2011, this authority confirmed this prohibition and asked for a Regional Plan of *Tratturi* aiming to map the state of the network of transhumant tracks at a regional scale and to establish the buffer to be respected, the buildings to be protected.

This legal intervention intended to assess the value of biodiversity characterizing this environment as well as relative cultural and social expressions, but many derogations to this assessment were institutionally admitted and ratified until a few years ago and sometimes also in the present.

In this sense, we consider legal and political quarrels and debates about uses and permissions on *Tratturi* as a controversial and challenging “heritage field”¹⁷ for the redefinition of agency and governance upon the local territories in which institutions at different scales, Cultural Heritage Ministry organisms at the local and regional levels and communities of practices are confronted with.

At the same time, this allows communities to re-articulate a relationship with the past¹⁸, which is part of the more general discourse on the future of the regional/trans-regional inland areas according to the present debate on this issue solicited by the *National Strategy on Inner Areas* representing presently the framework in which all these concepts are addressed and taken into consideration. As last instance we consider also this debate on the land use (the officially, but not effectively protected lands of *Tratturi*) as a very challenging matter about a “territory and legality” issue, which is particularly up to date in marginalized areas as during many years they have been considered a sort of “no man’s land” to distribute, almost without rules and permissions, despite their formal/legal definition as public and common good.

Herders who still practiced transhumance in Molise are decreasing dramatically in the last decades as well as researches and studies on transhumance grew up. Meanwhile, more recently, we noticed a new interest toward breeding activities and traditional pastoralism in Molise and border regions as well as a strong commitment on investments and national/regional programs for inner areas: cultural associations engaged in slow tourism proposals and innovative and social small farms oriented to sustainable, high-quality and ecological projects. They couple together local promotion actions and high-quality agri-food productions (cheese, meat, herbs, phyto-pharmacological products, and so on), slow move proposals and healthy and experiential tourism.

This is, somehow, a perfect metaphor of the “heritagizing” process. We noticed, in fact, increasing pressure to conservation/safeguard/valorization of cultural and environmental issues, which are becoming obsolescent, but

¹⁷ Herzfeld 1992, 2004; Palumbo 2001, 2003, 2007, 2009.

¹⁸ Herzfeld 1982.

even of living and shared systems of knowledge/practices (through UNESCO applications, data collecting and promotional activities, and so on) as a way for promoting territories.

At the same time, we also witness a revitalization of the traditional and nomadic pastoralism by a certain number of "return herders", engaged in a locally-based and short supply chain aiming to improve the quality of the product through the recovery of a natural feeding for the animals and their movement with a consequent improvement of milk, meat and even wool produced. All this goes hand in hand with the environmental and animal sustainability of farms and experiential tourism connected to the sharing of spaces and practices typical of local communities¹⁹.

4. *Multidisciplinarity and bio-cultural heritage: the eco-museum's debate*

Eco-museums are one of the most interesting issues discussed in the recent debate on "heritagization" of natural and cultural goods and a useful concept for revitalization of inner areas. Eco-museums, moreover, open several questions about methodology and multidisciplinary approaches²⁰. Definition and valorization of a territory come through the knowledge and vision of the places that geography, history, sociology, ecology and landscape planning, agrarian knowledge, ethno-botanic and agri-food studies contribute to shaping.

All these disciplines and researches permitted restitution of a complex space in which resources are ordered and systematized in Italy as well as in other European countries: ancient *cultivar* recuperation, specific livestock zoogenic regeneration through scientific cooperation, sharing and sense of the embedded community²¹.

In order to reach a deep understanding of local agrarian practices, pastoralism and intangible cultural heritage, in fact, we need scientific as well as social and human sciences and we need, moreover, to couple them with landscape planning – rural and urban planning – as well as museology and specific disciplinary competences, reflections on the building of the tourist destination, a socio-political analysis at a local, regional, national scale compared to the so-called "global hierarchies of value"²².

Extremely interesting – in the last years – are the urban and peripheral museums where shared and participated planning has been practiced as a radical political approach to the cultural and social action in the territories²³. If this

¹⁹ Palladino 2017.

²⁰ For one of the most updated documents on this issue, see Dal Santo *et al.* 2015.

²¹ Grasseni 2010.

²² Herzfeld 2004.

²³ Broccolini, Padiglione 2017; Bindi 2017a.

regenerative function at the urban/peri-urban scale is enough understandable, similarly we can grasp how much “heritagization” of places and practices and shared knowledge in the locality can engender interesting reactions and processes of empowerment and redefinition of local identity.

At the same time, it is important the anthropological reflection on the so-called “bone lands” – as Manlio Rossi-Doria defined the Italian backbone of the Apennine communities, for example²⁴. They are, somehow, presented as resilient lands, as repositories of knowledge, practices and stories, which would be fundamental for the tenure of a Country and where we would be able to appreciate the strength of the ancient socio-cultural links and paths. According to this interesting metaphor, “bone lands” would be opposed, somehow, to the “pulp lands”, on the coast, characterized by richness, easiness, facilities but at the same time often alienated or standardized, deprived of a real cultural mark.

Similarly, parish maps have been another important instrument and opportunity for the cooperation of anthropologists, historians, architects, urban planners, social workers and mediators in the local context, allowing a confrontation also with the policy-makers and communities²⁵.

The recent reflection on the cultural landscape, moreover, has also suggested to work on storytelling and video-documentation, but also on legal frameworks that are supposed to enhance conservation/safeguard/valorization processes²⁶.

Pastoralism is one of these excellent fieldworks of contamination among disciplines: routes of transhumance, the transformation of rough materials (milk, wool, handicrafts) and nomadic/semi-nomadic regimes.

Many different pools in the Italian Universities are presently studying this complex network of factors and knowledge/practice system. For example, Luca Battaglini at the University of Turin is the Director of a Multi-Disciplinary Degree on “Alpine Cultures” where even socio-anthropological disciplines are represented. A similar experience is still ongoing at the University of Perugia where animal genetics professors are cooperating with historians, anthropologists, geographers and so on. The same approach is applied by the centre BIOCULT of the University of Molise which is centred on “Bio-cultural heritage and local development” mixing together social and human sciences, agrarian and ecological competences, legal and economic studies.

Through these multidisciplinary researches, we assess environmental sustainability, ecological approaches and participation to decision-making processes and governance of the territories, a strategy for inner and peripheral areas, for fighting depopulation and marginality to global processes, to preserve

²⁴ Manlio Rossi-Doria has fixed the *partage* between “bone lands” and “pulp lands”, inner areas often economically depressed and depopulated and the “easy to reach”, productive and dynamic coasts in some of his works on the economy of rural Italian areas during the period of the economic transition (Bevilacqua 2002; De Benedictis 2002; Rossi-Doria 2005).

²⁵ Ballacchino, Bindi 2017b.

²⁶ Bindi 2017a

biodiversity and cultural diversity according to the mainstream of the major global agencies concerned. Particular attention deserves the very special approach to the inner regions of Southern Italy proposed by the Vito Teti's reflexion on the "poetics of staying". Teti, in fact, has pointed his attention on "what remains" in places that have been characterized by abandonment and emigration, on what is happening today in these places that are nowadays repopulated with old and new figures and on what can be reactivated thanks to ideas rooted in the locality but which also feed on new and more open outlook²⁷.

The research on central-southern Italian transhumance is an example of this radical multidisciplinary approach and a crucial topic for reflecting and planning on inner regions of Italy. We studied this phenomenon through many different perspectives trying to understand socio-cultural as well as political, legal and economic implications, animal genetics transformations and agrarian shifts. In the region Molise where transhumant tracks are still recognizable even if dramatically damaged by infrastructures despite the prohibitions to build or cultivate, only very few families are still practicing the transhumance.

It is the case of the Colantuono's from Frosolone, a family of traditional herders that continue to come from the mountain of the Molise to the plane of the Puglia with their cattle every year. Meanwhile, other families of shepherds and herders are reactivating small-medium scale transhumance directly linked to the researches addressed to them by our centre.

Another interesting case study, in fact, is that of Antonio Innamorato who has revitalized the ancient transhumant track between Campitello Matese and the archaeological site of Sepino²⁸ in September 2017. The event, called *Transumando*, has been then repeated in 2018 with an interesting increasing of audience and media coverage, which we have monitored and ethnographically and critically observed. This kind of activities is highly ambivalent and interesting for an ethnography of the processes of revitalization and valorization of rural and pastoral practices in the inner areas as a way to start processes of local economic and political transformation. They summarize, on the one hand, the relation intertwined between heritage community and the researchers to recover the memory of the ancient local transhumance and to return it to the local, the ambivalent local actor's expectations on the past/present relations. It is evident that this kind of "events" pose a lot of critical concerns: first of all, the relationship between the presence of the ethnographer on the field and the implicit solicitation that shepherds have felt to heritagize their dismissed (or almost totally dismissed) practices, but also the growth of funding and legal

²⁷ Teti 2004, 2016.

²⁸ Sepino Altilia is an archaeological area of Molise inhabited and built since the Samnites' period and successively implemented and enlarged during the Roman Empire. The settlement is one of the most important and well conserved of this area, and it was evidently connected to transhumance as a sheep market and fence as well as a cheese/wool transformation activities centre (De Benedittis *et al.* 1984).

frames indicating in *Tratturi* and transhumance conservation/valorization a potential resource for a new rural development.

This kind of “heritagizing” processes questioned the link between local practice, landscape conservation and cultural heritage implying a strict cooperation among disciplines and scientific competences, governance and political visions of the territory as well as the powerful theme of the paths – religious, cultural, fitness and wellness paths – that are increasingly offered, sustained and promoted at national/European scale as one of the most interesting perspectives for a sustainable tourism, local development and heritage communities empowerment above all in European inland.

5. *On the ground*

Since 2008, Colantuono’s, a well-known cheese farm in Frosolone area – one of the most inner areas of the Region Molise²⁹ –, supported by the local Group of Action, has launched a campaign of revitalization of transhumance proposing again the slow move of the cattle along the traditional “green highways” from Frosolone in Molise to San Marco in Lamis farm in Puglia, a 300 kilometres track, which their ancestors already did. During the last decade, this revitalized transhumance became a real tourist event to which many local associations, public institutions and private citizens aim at participating. In the same years, the Local Group of Action involved in this process has also started to prepare the dossier for the submission of Transhumance civilization of southern-central Italy to the UNESCO ICH list. This submission has not been immediately considered fit for the nomination but has been requested for a reformulation and implementation in the next years. Finally, the dossier has been definitely submitted in 2018 as an international submission with Austria and Greece, for the moment and presented by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests. In this new dossier, academic competences have been explicitly involved by the National Ministry both asking them for documents of support about the consistency of the cultural heritage of transhumance and the studies produced on it, but also in the synthetic description of the intangible cultural good in the video attached to the submitted dossier³⁰.

How has been realized the process of definition and preparation of this new dossier and how much the local communities have been involved in the

²⁹ The Frosolone area has been more recently individuated as one of the pilot areas of the National Strategy for the Region Molise (2016). The first pilot area for the Region Molise is the Matese area where the archaeological site of Sepino is placed.

³⁰ For example, the Centre of Research “BIOCULT” of the University of Molise has been involved in the realization of the dossier.

process? Which is the role of policy-makers at various scales – local, regional, national – in this process of definition and preparation of a safeguarding and promotional action on this topic? Note how, after the first, unsuccessful attempt to present a dossier, there has been in the procedure the entry by a political authority much more determined and of a higher territorial scale compared to a Local Action Group or the Region itself, as the National Ministry. This seems to become, increasingly, a trend to a sort of “state regime”³¹ process of safeguard/valorization, which is, somehow, in contrast with the original ratio of the UNESCO ICH Convention and even with the principles of the European Council’s Convention of Faro too.

This is a very soliciting question. Transhumance has received through this submission and other promotional actions that we mentioned huge visibility and strong institutional attention. At the same time, we need to monitor to what extent the communities have been and continue to be really involved in the process of safeguarding and valorizing this specific bio-cultural heritage as in the dictate of the Faro Convention and of the ICH Convention itself.

The “transhumance” event, in fact, risks reflecting a certain top-down organization and a moderate commercial-oriented trend.

More interesting seems to be, instead, the NGOs and free movements of citizens process of implicit “heritagization” of landscapes and cultures of ancient pastoralism in the regions concerned by our research project. There are, for example, many associations and informal groups engaged on territorial promotion through “slow tourism” proposals along the transhumant tracks and among farms and breeding small and medium enterprises. There are small and bigger groups of walkers, horse-riders, bikers involved in these pathways and many people involved in public and ceremonial events linked to transhumance which are still present in the territories (Carresi – oxen-charts races, holy processions, and so on). In many cases, it is a non-religious way of walking along the transhumant paths, searching the ancient stories of the places, traditional songs and music, handcrafts and food/conviviality. In some cases, the ecological engagement is coupled with leisure as well as the deeper knowledge of the local “typicality”. In at least two cases, a strong participatory approach has been set up by a local small community, which has provided a parish map of the small village and its countryside documenting also the ancient transhumant practices historically linked to the community itself being aware that this could represent a powerful instrument of enhancing and promoting the locality³². On a more strictly academic side, we are realizing moreover documentation of life stories of herders and shepherds.

Local communities – largely detached today from the transhumance – conserve many practices like food traditions and narratives (oral poetry, folk

³¹ Bendix *et al.* 2012.

³² Romano 2015; Ballacchino, Bindi 2017b.

songs and dances, and so on) even in the dramatic change they have assisted in the last decades, as I explained before. Thus, transhumant herder is commodified as a sort of icon of the Region – that recall a bit to the “super-rural” Molise of the fascist representation.

At Milan Expo 2015 Carmelina Colantuono’s image symbolically represented the Region. This choice was somehow strongly significant: Carmelina – often represented in the local and national media as «the cow-girl of Molise» or like «a native American horse-rider who take care of her cattle during the pathway»³³ – has become a “good-to-think” image of the Region in the middle between rural/pastoral society and a brand new tourist attraction territory in which ancient practices, revitalized and “heritagized” could represent the starting point for exiting the condition of marginality and invisibility in the national/international market of tourist destinations and foodscapes.

Almost contemporarily, in 2016, during the Convention of Slow Food for the Apennines Communities that took place in Castel del Giudice, a small village in the inner Molise, some young rural entrepreneurs were involved. They proposed a new possible model for the development of rural economy of the Region centred on new rural and breeding activities based on sustainability and typicality, but also in innovation and social inclusive ways of producing agri-food products. Many of them were and are “returning farmers and breeders” or “2.0 herders and rural people”, an extremely interesting “new ruralist” movement even if elitist enough for the moment³⁴.

In the same time, on the side of policies, we can observe some criticality in legal frameworks for conservation/valorization as well as in ecological movements’ activism or heritage communities’ concerns. Many rules – as we saw – are blurred as well as regional planning and systems of distribution of public domain to private citizens even if vigilance by citizens and communities seems to have grown in recent years.

This question seems to become an object of crucial confrontation among different institutional levels, civil society, associations and private citizens increasingly and the issue of consensus building on the territory is not exempt from this theme.

In this sense, transhumance is transformed in a sort of privileged context for evaluating institutional and power relationships in the local and, by this way, an excellent point of observation for political anthropology and ethnography of heritagizing processes. Moreover, this topic solicits the role of the ethnographer in the local and the question of its engagement and commitment with the communities he works with.

³³ Bindi 2012.

³⁴ Van der Ploeg 2008; Padiglione 2013-2014.

6. *Some questions as a conclusion*

A multidisciplinary approach can help to understand how far “heritagizing” processes are today involved in inner areas’ identity redefinition, in their re-functionalization as “good-to-think” places/objects in the global hierarchies of value and tourist destination market (handcrafts, commodities, events) as well as in the global discourse about food heritage-scape³⁵. This is a very ambivalent and challenging question. It implies, in fact, a reflection on the commodification of cultural assets, tourist destinations and events marketing above all for economically and sometimes socially depressed areas.

National governmental strategies for inlands as well as the different sets of rules on transhumant tracks conservation and valorization, protected areas regulation as well as local different civic uses of grassland are only some of the contexts to which we need to apply our attention and research. They are showing how much regional/national policies and super-national “heritage regimes” can affect and influence the very definition of what is to be considered as a local cultural heritage by different actors from the different scale powers and by specific groups of interest. Thus, our reflection has to be appointed on how much intangible cultural heritage could represent a real, though the controversial opportunity for local development, sustainable tourism enhancement and a real turning point for inner regions.

About transhumance, for example, we can notice how this phenomenon contributes to re-articulate a link between the mountain and the plain, between the inner areas and the coasts in which no hegemonic differentiations between different areas were present at least in the past, but all were necessary and complementary. In this sense, it represents an opportunity to radically rethink the relationship between the backbone and the pulp of a country and between past and present. At the same time farming activities in peripheral and fragile areas are increasingly managed and organized according to sustainable, durable, ethical as well as niche production principles. We are confronted, in fact, to a new set of questions managed by and with inland communities like for example territorial regeneration strategies, re-population through immigrant inclusion and traditional activities revitalization.

Finally, return herders and new peasant’s stories represent a growing and aware movement of thoughts and practices, which is supposed to change radically the concept of staying and moving, of leaving and remaining, regenerating a sense of belonging, which is at the same time inspired to the quest for a new shared and ethically sustainable wellbeing and the willingness of doing something for and with the others.

³⁵ Bindi, Grasseni 2014.

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Appendix







Figs. 1-4. Transhumant tracks and practice in Molise Region (Italy)

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