<e
visual ethnography

Dwelling. An Ethnographic Approach
Issue edited by
Valentina Lusini and Pietro Meloni

VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Vol. 9, II, 2020

COVER IMAGE: Motel Agip (photograph by Sara Camilli)

Dwelling: an anthropological gaze at the objects and practices of 'home-making'

Valentina Lusini, *University of Siena*
Pietro Meloni, *University of Perugia*

ABSTRACT

Although the house has always been an object of interest and investigation for anthropologists, it is only in the past few decades that it has taken on strategic importance in ethnographic research.
Reviewing the origin of these studies, we highlight some of the more recent research aims and how they can help us to understand the world we live in.

KEYWORDS

homes culture, material culture, anthropology, visual ethnography

BIO

Valentina Lusini is a lecturer in the Anthropology of Arts at the University of Siena. Her main research interests are contemporary art and anthropology and include a diversity of fields, from socially engaged art to museum studies. Her books include *Gli oggetti etnografici tra arte e storia. L'immaginario postcoloniale e il progetto del Musée du Quai Branly a Parigi* (L'Harmattan Italia, 2004), *Destinazione mondo: Forme e politiche dell'alterità nell'arte contemporanea* (Ombre Corte, 2013), and, with Pietro Meloni, *Culture domestiche. Saggi interdisciplinari* (Lares, 2015). Among Special Issues she has edited are *Collaborative Art Practices and their Dynamics* (Visual Ethnography, 2017) and *Gli usi sociali del tempo libero: Economie della condivisione nella crisi* (Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo, 2019).

Pietro Meloni received his PhD in "Anthropology, Ethnology, Cultural Studies" from the University of Siena in 2010, with a thesis on practices of consumption in everyday life in Tuscany.
In 2017, he obtained the Italian Scientific Certification as Associate Professor in Anthropology.
He has conducted research in Italy and he has published on issues related to mass consumption, mass media, material culture, intangible cultural heritage, fashion, craftsmanship, and everyday life.
Since 2020, Pietro is lecturer in Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Perugia.
His recent books include *Il tempo rievocato. Antropologia del patrimonio e cultura di massa in Toscana* (2014) and *Antropologia del consumo. Doni, merci, simboli* (2018).

lusiniva@unisi.it
pietro.meloni@unipg.it

Within the sphere of cultural anthropology, the house has been the object of important analytical efforts. Lewis H. Morgan's 1881 study on traditional architecture and domestic life among Native Americans is one of the earliest examples of this focus in the anthropological field. Morgan reviews the dwelling styles and material culture of Native populations in northern New Mexico, and those of the Aztecs and sedentary populations of ancient Mexico. In reconstructing the marriage alliances of various American populations, Morgan uses the house and the domestic space to trace the origins of the family from an evolutionist perspective, in which the form of the house, and the sedentariness or mobility of peoples, corresponds to evolutive achievements that shape human history. The study influenced Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; the latter dealt with Morgan's studies a few years later in his well-known book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan* (1884).

Claude Lévi-Strauss often described the domestic space and the organization of the Bororo village, using it to explain the functioning of a society that establishes divisions based on gender, roles, hierarchies and subjugation:

> It is well known that the model Bororo village consists of eight collective huts, each one housing several families and all arranged round an open space, in the center of which stands the men's house (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 37). This was the *baitemannageo* or men's house. The unmarried men all slept there and, in the daytime, when they were not out hunting or fishing, or engaged in some public ceremony on the dancing-ground, all the men of the tribe could be found there. (The dancing-ground was a large oval space immediately to the west of the bachelor's house). Women were strictly forbidden to enter the *baitemannageo*; the perimeter huts were their domain and the men would go back and forth several times a day along the path through the bushwood which led from their club to their conjugal hearth. Seen from the top of a tree, or from a roof, the Bororo village looked like a cart-wheel, with the bachelor's house as the hub, the established paths as the spokes, and the family huts to make up the rim (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 203).

In this frontier of separate, symbolically dense and often complementary spheres, domestic space – indoors and out – is central to understanding the essence of a culture. As Lévi-Strauss further explains:

> and yet the men's house has a significance over and above that of its being, as I have described, the center of the social and religious life of the village. The lay-out of the village does not only allow full and delicate play to the institutional system; it summarizes and provides a basis for the relationship between Man and the Universe, between Society and the Supernatural, and between the living and the dead (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 2016).

In *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), Lévi-Strauss separates men and women in a state of nature and culture. The prohibition of women from entering the men's house is here a recognition of the need to separate nature from culture.

The separation between the male and female universes reflected in domestic space was efficaciously described by Pierre Bourdieu in his analysis of the Kabila house, an ethnological study in which the French sociologist considers the construction of the domestic space from a structuralist point of view:

> Thus, the house is organized according to a set of homologous oppositions fire/water, cooked/raw, high/low, light/shade, day/night, male/female, nif/hurma, fertilizing/able to be fertilized. But in fact the same oppositions are established between the house as a whole and the rest of the universe, that is, the male world, the place of assembly, the fields, and the market. It follows that each of these two parts of the house (and, by the same token, each of the objects placed in it and each of the activities carried out in it) is in a sense qualified at two degrees, first as female (nocturnal, dark, etc.) insofar as it partakes of the universe of the house, and secondarily as male or female insofar as it belongs to one or the other of the divisions of that universe (Bourdieu 1972: 90-91).

Bourdieu defines the house as the mirror of Kabila society which, founded on homologous relations, is concentrated in the male-female dichotomy: the interior of the house is the female space, and the exterior is the place of male dominion and action. Delineated, circumscribed spaces, separate and shared, define roles and tell and us about the "worlds" they live in. The woman looks after the domestic world, while the man can observe the outside world; inside is beautiful thanks to the woman, and outside, thanks to the man (Bourdieu 1980). The idea of the house as a reflection of the social universe is very

powerful, and in some cases, the structural opposition between inside and outside also includes spaces like balconies or street entrances, which are considered contaminants of the domestic interior (Scarpellini 2008).

Sarah Pink maintains that studies on domestic life have great appeal among social science scholars because they allow us to analyze and understand meanings of daily life, pleasures and routines which are generally hidden to outsiders (Pink 2012: 49). She also notes that for a long time – as exemplified by the interpretations of Lévi-Strauss and Bourdieu – a semiotic and structuralist reading of domestic space was prevalent, leading us to read the house as a "text." In reality, it is more often an agglomeration that is difficult to reduce solely to normative activities, but which also comprises relations between different identities, agencies, resources and relationships within it, which connect the present with biographical selections from the past (Pink 2004: 64).

The house is a locus of private life, clearly separate from public life. It is a protected space in which the family takes refuge, sheltering from the weather and from attacks by animals or by other men (Roche1997). It is thus a place of internal retreat, but also of opening towards the outside. An environment where we feel welcomed and defended, and a place where we construct social relations and attribute roles, separating zones we can use from those that must not be intruded upon. The house is, furthermore, a porous, permeable container. Contrary to what it habitually thought, the house constantly allows itself to be penetrated by the outside world; it protects us but does not isolate us. Windows are openings onto the world, and at the same time, wounds that the house cannot heal and that let the outside look in, and snoop – curtains are the "bandages" that people use to temporarily protect themselves from the indiscreet gazes of passersby. Windows are also an extension of the domestic space: for many people, the view they enjoy from a window or from a balcony is an integral part of the house (Forino 2014). Thus, the house is an enclosed place, but it cannot be conceived of without the outside space that surrounds it.

The separation between inside and outside is symbolic and ritual. Arnold van Gennep (1909) defined the threshold, the door and the porch as liminal zones, to which rituals of protection, caution and welcoming are dedicated. Passing through the door of a house is effectively a rite of passage, or of admittance, that sanctions the entry of a stranger into the protected space of those who receive him. Splashing the threshold with blood or water, as well as sprinkling blood or perfume on the doorframe, are practices that acknowledge the door as the boundary between the outside world and the domestic one.

The study of the house, then, allows us to investigate private, intimation relationships that are part of an experience that combines aspects of religion, routinized activities, cultural conceptions and everyday habits. Not only sacred and profound spaces, or spaces designated for men or for women, but also technical evolutions of objects, adaptations of or to their use, arrangements that comment on a family's social status. Studying domestic furnishings (Meloni 2011), design (Pink 2017; Clarke 2018), banal objects like Tupperware (Clarke 1999) or Ikea furniture (Murphy 2015; Garvey 2017) is a way to understand the functions of the house and the ways in which people view themselves and the world they live in.

The house is a container of history: it holds layers of the lives and memories of various generations and, from the past to the present, its walls preserve the family impulse, reproduced over time. When they are passed down, reminders of parents or prior owners can be reassuring, or they can be cumbersome: they comfort us with the idea of family continuity, or disturb us as the intrusion and intransience of something unknown and dangerous (Lipman 2016). This happens in part because the house, as Daniel Roche writes (1997), is also the expression of a fossilized moment in time, which condenses the past and projects itself into the future.

In recent decades, with the development of a few important international lines of study that link consumption and material culture, a bona fide field of research on domestic cultures has opened up.

Daniel Miller, for example, is an author who had contributed greatly to the reinvigoration of material culture studies, making the house one of his preferred objects of investigation. In *Home Possessions* (2001), Miller tries to move beyond the theoretical-methodological perspective of structuralism to focus on micro-ethnographies of domestic space, in which negotiations, bonds and conditioning work on two levels: people model their houses according to their own tastes and wishes, and the house acts on people by establishing rules, imposing choices and limiting spaces of action. It is both a reflection of social relations and a means by which they are constructed. Mary Douglas' study on the tyranny of the house

(1991) is a good example of this relationship leading to the construction of a discursive order (Foucault 1971) in which "non-human social actors" (Latour 2005) play an active role in defining human actions. Douglas' analysis reveals how the house, the result of an attempt by its inhabitants to fulfill their own ideas, often tends to be presented as an active subject that interacts and sets limits, structuring the family's actions. It is a particular space, localizable but not fixed, in which there is a sort of distributive justice that makes it something different from a hotel or other spaces that resemble houses but are not:

> For these reasons a home is a model for kinds of distributive justice. The reference to morality points a major difference between a home and a hotel. Both plan for the future, but the planning of the hotel follows criteria of cost efficiency. The reason why the home cannot use market reasoning is, to extend Suzanne Langer's term, that it is a virtual community. It is not a monetary economy, though a household could be. Suppose a group of people sharing the rent of a house, each with his or her own timed access to the cooker and corner of the larder, each coming and going independently of the others, each autonomously making plans and keeping careful check of requital for services rendered by the others-that would be a household. They would settle conflicts over scarce resources by bargaining on semimarket principles. They would argue about their claims in terms of functional priorities or in terms of relative contributions. Inputs would be measured against outputs. This is the kind of institution which the "human capital" theorists can analyze with ease. At the other end of the scale from market to nonmarket is the home, with its laughably complex, tyrannical rules, unpredictably waived and unpredictably honored, and never quite amenable to rational justification. The question for the theory of collective choice is how a home manages to demand and to get sacrifices from its members, how it creates the collectivity which is more than the sum of parts. In what follows the word "home" is treated as a collective good, and focus will be on how contributions are exacted (Douglas 1991: 297-298).

The house is thus a complex world, capable of creating rules that serve to establish an equilibrium that reigns over family members' various subjectivities – different needs, desires, levels of imagination. The devotion and love that Miller (1998) saw in daily food shopping practices are closely tied to the house. Food shopping ensures that the refrigerator is supplied with all the items the family needs; that the kitchen shelves hold biscuits and other foods that children can rely on finding when they get hungry. Love for one's family encompasses rules negotiated between humans and non-humans. A child's entry into adolescence corresponds to a demand for privacy that may take the form of the need for a room to himself, or the need to spend more time using the bathroom, or a request for greater freedom than in the past. These requests cannot be granted by the family alone: it is the house that establishes how much time a family member can occupy the bathroom in the morning without creating problems for the rest of the family. Coming home later in the evening may bring changes in terms of the habit of eating at a certain hour, and this could compromise the delicate equilibrium the family has constructed in close collaboration with the house. Turning the volume of music too high is not just an action that disturbs parents, brothers and sisters; it also appears inopportune from the point of view of the unwritten rules that shape domestic life.

Entering a house, speaking with its inhabitants, observing the furnishings, noticing whether it is clean and analyzing roles and hierarchies gives us an often-faithful picture of society and, along with it, the imagination and desires of the people who live in it.

In one of his various studies on domestic culture, Miller (2008) collaborating with Fiona Parrot, analyzed about a hundred houses in a street in South London over a period of about 17 months. Here the author presents very heterogenic family portraits that allow us to view the house through a kaleidoscopic lens, as a place where different styles, tastes and desires give shape to a completely new type of domestic universe. In his studies, Miller has cogently explained hos the study of material objects allows us to investigate and understand practices of self-construction, relationships with the past, and the need to anchor ourselves to tradition in order to convey what we are, often following the development of a society in which consumer goods are becoming increasingly easily accessible (Miller 1995: 149). Miller also proposes the practice of ethnography as an instrument capable of capturing the subjectivity of social actors. Ethnography allows us to peer inside people's lives and observe how the house becomes a container of forms of consumption. Ethnography should be the true objective of anthropology (Miller 2017), because it is by comparing different stories that we can read and then analyze the complexity of the contemporary world.

The house is not a self-contained object of study, but is, rather, opaque and liquid. In the house we study the people who live there, the objects of which it is composed, and the relationships among people, spaces and things. Studying the house also means studying its absence, the desire to possess something on the part of those who do not have it, and thus the political actions of those seeking to obtain a domestic space as well.

The articles we present in this issue of Visual Ethnography seek to dealt with the complexity of the house in the contemporary world, making use of visual and ethnographic tools to talk about spaces, anxieties, desires, relationships, objects and political actions. The essays by Cacciotti and Mazzarino discuss forms of occupation in two different contexts: urban Rome and the Harbour of Copenhagen. Sbardella's essay focuses on the relationship between the sacred and objects in the domestic space, while the piece by Grilli and Meloni presents an autoethnography of the house in the time of Covid-19. Tosi Cambini reflects on Rom habitation. The photo essays (by Marrazzo, Ferrara, Camilli) that accompany the articles refer to domestic and urban spaces, interweaving outdoors with indoors. Giacomelli's report on the house in Italy and Paggi's extensive account of Rom habitations in Europe conclude the monographic section of the issue.

REFERENCES

BOURDIEU, Pierre
1977   *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1980   *Le sens pratique*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

CLARKE, Alison J.
1999   *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America*. New York: Smithsonian.
2017   (ed) *Design Anthropology: Object Cultures in Transition*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

DOUGLAS, Mary
1991   The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space. *Social Research*, 58(1), 287–307.

ENGELS, Friedrich
2010   *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. London: Penguin Books Limited.

FORINO, Imma
2001   *L'interno nell'interno. Una fenomenologia dell'arredamento*. Firenze: Alinea

FOUCAULT, Michel
1983   *L'ordre du discours: leçon inaugurale au Collège de France prononcé le 2 décembre 1970*. Paris: Gallimard.

GARVEY, Pauline
2017   *Unpacking IKEA: Swedish Design for the Purchasing Masses*. London: Routledge.

LATOUR, Bruno
2005   *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude
1961   *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Atheneum.
1964   *The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologiques, Volume 1*. New York: Harper.

LIPMAN, Caron
2016   *Co-habiting with Ghosts: Knowledge, Experience, Belief and the Domestic Uncanny*. London: Routledge.

VAN GENNEP, Arnold
2013   [1909] *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge.

MELONI, Pietro
2011   *I modi giusti. Cultura materiale e pratiche di consumo nella provincia toscana contemporanea*. Pisa: Pacini.

MILLER, Daniel
1995   Consumption and Commodities. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 141−161.
1998   *A Theory of Shopping*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
2001   (ed) *Home Possessions. Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*. Oxford: Berg.
2013   *The Comfort of Things*. New Jersey: Wiley.
2017   Anthropology is the discipline but the goal is ethnography. *HAU*, 7(1), 27−31.

MORGAN, Henri Lewis
1881   *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

MURPHY, Keith M.
2019   *Swedish Design: An Ethnography*. London: Cornell University Press.

PINK, Sarah
2004   *Home Truths. Gender, Domestic Objects and Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg.
2012   *Situating Everyday Life. Practices and Place*. London: Sage.
2017   (ed) *Making Homes: Ethnography and Design*. London: Bloomsbury.

ROCHE, Daniel
1997   *Histoire des choses banales: Naissance de la consommation (XVIIe-XIXe siècle)*. Paris: Fayard.

SCARPELLINI, Emanuela
2008   *L'Italia dei consumi: Dalla Belle Époque al nuovo millennio*. Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza.

When squatting becomes 'stable precarity'.
The case of Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs, Rome

Chiara Cacciotti, *Università "La Sapienza" di Roma*

ABSTRACT

Starting from an ethnographic fieldwork project conducted within a squat in Rome (*Santa Croce*/Spin Time Labs), this paper aims to investigate the effects on the lives of squatters in a particular condition of housing liminality that I here define as 'stable precarity', due to the more systemic chronicization of housing emergency at a city level. The paper, therefore, takes a two-fold approach: on the one hand, it interprets some of the daily life experiences in the building and the moral economy of the squatter's community; on the other, it shows the attempts of squatters and activists of the political movement in Rome that squatted the building (Action) to move on from their liminal condition, specifically by transitioning from the more traditional political instruments of the struggle over housing in Rome to an informal practice of urban regeneration that seeks to open the building to the surrounding neighborhood, with the aim of making the squat a common good for public use.

KEYWORDS

precarity, housing emergency, moral economy, squatting, urban social movements

BIO

Ph.D. Candidate in Cultural Anthropology within an Urban Planning Department (DICEA, Sapienza University of Rome). Her main areas of research are the relationship between migration and housing policies, cosmopolitan studies and precarization studies. She has conducted extensive fieldwork on the political function of squatting for housing in Rome, together with how the coexistence between Italians and migrants inside squats is reshaping the historical purposes of the roman struggle over housing. She recently translated for Raffaello Cortina Editore (2019), together with Piero Vereni and Simone Cerulli, the volume *On Kings* written by David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins.

chiara.cacciotti@uniroma1.it

Introduction

The rise of neoliberalism in all aspects of our lives (Eriksen 2017), rather than widespread well-being, has brought uncertainty about our individual and collective conditions. This is especially true for housing, which is increasingly perceived as an end point rather than as a starting point for a stable and secure future. Most importantly, the lack of a shelter usually also leads to a precarization in all other spheres of life: a condition that has increasingly led to a perception of domesticity as something at risk for a large slice of the population, both for the more canonically marginal groups in society – today often embodied in the figure of the migrant – and for the middle and working classes.

In Rome, since the post-Second World War period, the so-called local housing emergency is no longer seen as an exception but as a recurrent event. The gradual development of a cultural and moral configuration of housing as a social trophy has also influenced the history of public housing, specifically by shifting the focus of housing and social policies towards the productive middle class (Salsano 2008; Tosi 2009; Vereni 2015) and thus by contributing to the creation of a particular category of excluded and 'diverse' people that I define as housing alterity, previously consisting of the unemployed and immigrants from Southern Italy and now mostly non-European migrants. Yet, the persistent scarcity of housing policies for these vulnerable segments of the population still tends to be represented today as a 'crisis', either as an overall precarization caused by a rupture in the normal order of things or as an intermediary moment of chaos (Kosseleck 2002: 8). Nevertheless, for many people in Rome, the housing emergency often acquires an enduring hold as it becomes endemic rather than episodic (Vigh 2008: 7): a chronic crisis that causes a continuous critical assessment of the social environment, one's position and the possibilities of action available within it.

For these reasons, in this article I examine the social and experiential consequences of such an emergency as a condition for Italian and migrant squatters by focusing my ethnographic and analytical attention on the concept of chronicity as an experience of constant crisis (Estroff 1993). Following Henrik Vigh, instead of placing crisis in context I argue that we need to see crisis as context – as a terrain of action and meaning – thereby opening up the field to ethnographic investigation (2008). In fact, the entrenched relationship in Rome between cultural diversity and the temporariness of low-income housing solutions reveals a constant maintenance of a state of emergency, a paradoxical situation that I here define as 'stable precarity' (*precarietà stanziale*): that is, that peculiar condition of all squatters who live in abandoned buildings occupied by squatting movements, characterized both by a situation of prolonged crisis where social life is made sense of and unfolds within a terrain of risk and uncertainty (Whyte 1997) and, at the same time, by the possibility to settle down and gain a domestic space without market intermediation. Investigations into different forms of informal housing among migrants are not rare in the social sciences – from human geography to anthropology, covering both the Global North and the Global South (Belloni *et alii* 2020; Bolzoni *et alii* 2015; Giorgi and Fasulo 2013). Indeed, the transition from a chronicization of the housing emergency to a precarization of the lives of people experiencing a housing emergency in squats politically organized by squatting movements has created a particular existential condition – that of stable precarity. This condition is mainly characterized by being settled, even if this entails uncertainty, specifically in former public and private buildings not originally designed for residential purposes and then transformed into dwellings, with both domestic and common areas.

The purpose of this paper is to approach the housing emergency in Rome not as a singular event but rather as an ongoing and precarized process, with the aim of showing how this social chronic crisis has led today to a condition of stable precarity inside squatted buildings characterized by both the desire of the squatters to transform the precariousness of their situation into a medium-to-long term dignified and legitimate condition and by the awareness of the precariousness of that experience, which could actually end in eviction at any time. This contribution will specifically focus on all these aspects through a case study, a squat located in the central *Esquilino* neighborhood in Rome (*Santa Croce*/Spin Time Labs) where I lived for almost a year in order to conduct ethnographic research for my Ph.D. project.

In the first section, I outline a brief ethnographic introduction to the case study and I theoretically define the concept of stable precarity that emerged during my fieldwork, together with what it means for squatters, and how a large-scale phenomenon such as precarization has affected the housing needs of low-income Italians and migrants in Rome. In the second section, I problematize the two interrelated dimensions of the squatters' stable precarity, namely social and personal housing precarization, through some ethnographic encounters that showed me how it is possible, within a shared condition of precarity

and deprivation, to have manifold experiences of stable precarity that can be interpreted for some squatters as an active search for social legitimacy (Manocchi 2012) and, conversely, for others, as an attempt to conquer the privilege of being invisible (Appadurai 2003) represented by the condition of having a roof, however precarious. In the two concluding sections, I introduce the local moral economy (Fassin 2009; 2015). I also describe how the occurrence of an event such as the Pope's almsgiver restoring electricity in the building has led me to conceive of *Santa Croce*/Spin Time as a culture that constantly shapes collective action (Swidler 1986).

PHOTO 1: Slogans in the squat under analysis: "Here everything is inhabited". (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)

Stable precarity

Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs (better known as Spin Time) is a nominally illegal squat and social center, within which an informal urban regeneration project is being undertaken. The squat is located in the heart of the well-off *Esquilino* neighborhood, one of the most central in the city and at the same time notoriously characterized by some issues more typical of the periphery such as homelessness and a widespread social malaise, mainly concentrated close to the main railway station, *Roma Termini*.

The building is spatially and socially divided into two main parts: *Santa Croce*, the residential part, and Spin Time, the social and cultural center. It is a seven-storey building covering approximately 22 thousand square meters of floor space. It was once owned by the State Social Security Institution INPDAP, but is now the property of the real-estate fund InvestiRE SGR SPA. In 2013, it was occupied by the squatting movement Action and there are now 143 families (up to 400 people) of 25 different nationalities living there.

I lived inside the building for almost a year[1], conducting ethnographic research for my Ph.D. From the very beginning, I tried to manage what Duncan Fuller called "the politics of integration" (1999); that is, the political integration of the researcher into the community he or she is studying. In this regard, Fuller adopted the famous feminist motto "The personal is political", according to the interpretation of Stanley and Wise (1993) and Routledge (1996). Routledge, in particular, has reworked the concept from a methodological point of view, noting how political awareness can come through personal involvement and how the strategies of both involvement and integration can deconstruct the barriers between academia and "the lives of people it professes to represent" (Katz 1994: 73) that are too often taken for

---

[1] From 1st March to 30th November 2019. However, I started attending activities in the building in December 2018, continuing to do so after the end of the fieldwork.

granted. This kind of involvement by the researcher moves away from the presumed but questionable objectivity of 'going academic' but, at the same time, strives to remain critical and to continually question the researcher's social positioning in terms of class, gender, nationality and so on, in an ongoing attempt to remain in a "space of betweenness" (*ibid.*), which also prevents the researcher from 'going native'. My intent was to endeavor to find common ground, the relational dimension of ethnographic fieldwork that would help me apprehend the most interesting aspects to explore, starting with what my interlocutors wanted to draw attention to, while maintaining our mutual differences and avoiding 'going squatter', which I felt was epistemologically and intellectually dishonest, given my lack of housing emergency.

PHOTO 2*: The room where I lived during the fieldwork (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)*

In the beginning, I felt strange precisely because I was able to leave at the end of each assembly or meeting and return to my social (and housing) normalcy. As a result, I felt that I was unable to grasp the real complexity of their precarious living conditions. However, once I moved into the building all the relationships that were initially established on a more professional basis gradually became more and more personal. Once I was living in the squat, the 'political' was visible to me (also) through the 'personal'. As the months went by, I realized that almost all the squatters I met in the building shared a chronically precarious life story, since they were either unemployed or low-income workers and they always found it hard to settle down and pay a rent in the Italian capital.

Despite (and also due to) the long-term duration of their precarious status, and given the nominally illegal status of the building, most of *Santa Croce*'s squatters were trying to find their own way to inhabit and settle in that precarious and uncertain condition, and they each had practices and discourses that were sometimes also influenced by their past housing experiences:

> *Does your home here reflect who you are?*
>
> I don't really have that vision of home. I mean, it reflects who I am because everything I have here has been recycled... and I'm fine with that, even if it's just a small room. Perhaps, after all, the idea of doing something permanent would be pushing it a bit too far for me...
>
> *So, do you feel more comfortable in a temporary condition?*
>
> Probably not... but it's what I have, and I try to manage it. I'm not under a bridge and I am happy about that because I have lived on the streets and I know what kind of life that is, it is a

stressful life. I think I have just lowered my expectations because I don't want to have too many expectations, I live in the present and if one day they gave us public housing it would be quite another thing, but right now this way of living goes hand in hand with my prosperity... which is not a lot! (June 7, 2019).

Jennifer is fifty and she has lived alone in Italy since 1996, mostly in apartments shared with students. Nonetheless, the precariousness of her work situation often led her to move house until, after a short life experience in Milan, she finally discovered Action. When she arrived in Rome "with five euros in her jeans pocket", she was hosted by a friend while she looked for a better solution, which she finally found in squatting a building in 2012 and then in *Santa Croce* in 2016, after undergoing an eviction process. The apparently oxymoronic sense of feeling both precarious and at home in *Santa Croce*, in her case, was therefore not due to a disappointment or a failure to fulfil her housing expectations, but rather to a life history that was chronically precarious, which lowered her expectations and led to her living in the moment, without forcing herself to search for a permanence she felt she couldn't achieve.

Given the heterogeneity of housing backgrounds and future projects among the squatters in the building, together with the fact that many of them wish to permanently settle in the building, one of Action's main goals is to ensure as much as possible that squatters do not just consider their own individual needs, or at least that the latter do not constitute an obstacle to achieving collective well-being and to the political struggle over housing in general:

> Many people think that this is an end point. Many. And this is a mistake, because you then rest on your laurels, not understanding that this is not a point of arrival, it is a transitory and starting point. Nobody told us "Yes, this place is yours, you can keep it, do whatever you want". We are all transitory and it should just be a starting point to reach the final goal (Massimo, January 16, 2019).

These continuous reminders of and references to the temporary nature of their collective experience, together with the chronicized precarity of their individual life trajectories, embodies both the attempt by the squatters to build by themselves the stability denied them by housing policies and the political belief that only through struggle and collective action will they be able to gain real housing stability, and entry into the public housing system. Faced with a historically consolidated approach, which allocates perpetually temporary solutions to the social category in question without recognizing the need for a domestic space, the chronicity of the housing emergency also creates within the squatted buildings a stabilization of the squatters' precariousness that becomes a structural fact, but remains precarious, as the risk of eviction without stable alternative solutions remains constant.

For these reasons, after carrying out my fieldwork, I decided to call this peculiar condition 'stable precarity' in reference to the living conditions experienced by those who live in the squats associated with the squatting movements in Rome. This term is two-fold in meaning: the first refers to the set of internally generated daily practices and discourses starting from the desire of the squatters to re-signify the neoliberal housing paradigm, and therefore to conquer for themselves a non-market stability that transforms the precariousness of their situation into a dignified and legitimate condition; the second, conversely, sees in chronic precariousness a reason to make a political statement declaring their legitimacy to the outside world, by virtue of the fact that this precariousness could end at any moment due to exogenous causes. Therefore, talking about stable precarity means talking about the squatters' attempts to feel at home in abandoned buildings, while trying at the same time to remain aware that this experience could suddenly end with an eviction: hence the constant effort of the leadership, or "cadres" of the movements (Vereni 2015), to make everyone think of the squat not as a point of arrival, but as a starting point for housing stability that can be gained only through the struggle for housing.

In recent years, precarity has indeed been revisited as it no longer exclusively means being employed in temporary jobs and lacking social security (Pierret 2013). Revived interest in precarity has been seen across the social sciences (Bourdieu 1998; Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Ettlinger 2007; Fudge and Strauss 2013; Millar 2014; Standing 2014; Della Porta *et alii* 2015; Schierup *et alii* 2015; Agergaard and Ungruhe 2016). Therefore, nowadays precarization is not only limited to the labor market but can penetrate entire lifeworlds of individuals and groups of people (Butler 2004; Lazzarato 2004; Morini and Fumagalli 2010). Moreover, it can overturn existing behavioral habits and conventions of human interaction (Della Porta *et alii* 2015: 2). Henrick Vigh, whose work is very important in the field of African studies –

although little known in relation to urban studies in Western countries – undertook studies involving young people in Bissau and wrote that, from their point of view, crisis and conflict are almost never seen as passing phenomena. Constant decline has actually led to the emergence of social, economic, political and identificatory decay, with the consequence that critical events are set against a background of persistent conflict and decline (2008: 6). For young people in Bissau, war is no longer seen as an exception but a recurrent event. Vigh therefore states that rather than taking a traditional social science approach to the phenomenon by placing a given instance of crisis in its historical context, as anthropologists we should be able to see crisis as context (Vigh 2006): that is, as a terrain of action and meaning rather than a single episode, which can then lead us to an understanding of critical states as pervasive contexts rather than singular events.

Photo 3*: Children's shoes in the squat, lined up to dry after being washed in a shared washing machine (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)

Following this interpretation, if we consider precarity as "a life without a promise of stability" (Tsing 2015: 2) or a state of emergency that is the rule rather than the exception (Benjamin 1999: 248), then the housing emergency for low-income people in Rome can also be defined as a precarious condition that has paradoxically become a certainty, and is usually followed by an attempt to achieve and build stability within a condition of chronic precarity. At the same time, people in Rome can potentially find a response to this need by turning to squatting movements: as Florence Bouillon wrote (2011), contrary to infantilizing and often degrading solutions such as reception centers, squats give their inhabitants a feeling of mastery of the space and a moral appropriation of such space, providing them with both a domestic and a shared space.

Indeed, in Rome there is a consolidated local tradition in representing housing emergency in terms of an undifferentiated and 'extended' social body. Most of the time, the housing policy involves providing a temporary roof without simultaneously intervening in other areas that are part of the complexity of life experience of those who are in an emergency situation or housing discomfort, thus making that same roof a totally precarious solution. Far from guaranteeing a right to housing for everyone, such an approach has therefore tended to make that same emergency a chronic condition for a whole slice of the urban population, leading to systematic preferences and exclusions that have then been formalized in policies mostly aimed at the intermediate social strata and, in particular, at workers as the privileged beneficiaries of social housing. This model laid the foundations for what subsequently became the 'counter-history' of movements in Rome for the right to housing (Vereni 2015). In fact, talking about chronically temporary housing solutions for migrants and the poor in Rome means talking about those interventions on the institutional front aimed at the more 'diverse' sections of the population of Rome:

in the past, the so-called *baraccati*, shanty-town dwellers and internal migrants originating mainly from southern Italy, nowadays, Italians and migrants in economic difficulty and housing precariousness. Two housing alterities that are certainly far from homogeneous in terms of characteristics and needs, to which, however, housing solutions have always been applied with little recognition of these people's legitimate desire to build a domestic sphere – a construction that is socially 'acceptable' mostly if it is achieved through market intermediation.

However, in the past thirty years, both non-European migrants and the so-called middle classes entered these contexts for the first time, thus favoring the rise and development of the three main squatting for housing movements in Rome: the *Coordinamento cittadino lotta per la casa* (Citizens' Committee for the Fight for Housing), founded in 1988; Action, created in 2002 from the *Diritto alla Casa* (Right to Housing) movement that emerged in 1999; the *Blocchi Precari Metropolitani* (Precarious Metropolitan Blocks, that emerged in 2007). The long-term history and the complexity of the experiences outlined above are then a direct consequence of the city's chronic housing emergency. This has consequently led to the current state of stable precarity among squatters, which, from a spatial point of view, generated demand not for new constructions but for reclaiming unused portions of the city, and, from a relational point of view, an everyday normalization of social otherness through which a private space similar to a normal apartment is lived and furnished (Vereni 2013). At the same time, squatters are responsible for co-managing and looking after the common spaces, in other words the public space, within the squat.

When the domestic sphere, and therefore the possibility of being permanently settled, is achievable only through market intermediation, and since this process has also influenced access criteria to social housing in Rome (Salsano 2008; Tosi 2009; Vereni 2015), the alternative for those who do not fulfil any of the preconditions (therefore for those who are part of the housing alterity) is to 'conquer' a domestic space through the act (and process) of squatting. This is the moment when, knowingly or not, they find themselves in a system and a historically consolidated and sedimented practice, although very different from what it was before the arrival of foreign migrants: what remains is the squatting movements' desire to transform individual personal need into a broader collective political project (and subject) that does more than provide a solution to a material problem, but tries to carry on a process of politicization and education that is modeled and forged also from space, with the latter being far from a mere container (Caciagli 2019).

Following the analytical bipartition reported by Carlotta Caciagli (*ibid.*), the system of squatting for housing in Rome corresponds neither to the deprivation-based theoretical approach that sees squats as only an immediate solution to the lack of a roof (Bosi and Zamponi 2015; Cattaneo and Engel-Di Mauro 2015) nor, conversely, to the approach that sees these spaces exclusively as political spaces (Pruijt 2012), regardless of the need that is nevertheless present. Instead, in Rome what occurs is a combination of these two poles, within a configuration that subsumes both individual urgency and the attempt to prefigure a sustainable cultural and political alternative to the neoliberal housing model.

An endless liminality

The condition of stable precarity experienced by *Santa Croce*/Spin Time's squatters is therefore an example of crisis as context (Vigh 2008), since it remains precarious even though the people in the squat are trying to inhabit it and to build a domestic sphere for themselves and a project for the city. For this reason, while they are trying to envision and spread a social housing model that could be a potential solution to the crisis, at the same time they are experiencing various ways of feeling at home (or not) in the squatted building, starting from the effects of the crisis as a context in their individual life stories. In fact, "one of the most notable aspects of crisis is that it illuminates how and to what extent our notion of self is intimately tied to the social" and, consequently, "the way in which deterioration in one aspect of our existence will, almost by definition, affect other areas of our lives" (*ibid.*: 15). The precarity as a context from which squatters try to find a way to feel at home, even if only for a brief period of their lives, should make us aware of the relationship between the personal and the social: precisely because crisis can destabilize the way we usually construct ourselves as parts of larger entities. In corroding the constructions of meaning by which the different spheres of our existence are interwoven, it can also trigger an attempt to 'inhabit' that same crisis. Treating this stable precarity as an impersonal phenomenon would therefore make us think of crisis as a value-free transition from one state to another,

while instead when focused on the study of people – and their meanings and understandings – crisis is not a word that can be separated from its connotations on individual lives.

However, after the implementation of the Lupi Decree in 2014[2], becoming a squatter in Italy has become much more complicated. The measure in question effectively denies residency for squatters. Since residency constitutes the requirement for access to many social rights, for instance, welfare, healthcare, and public housing (Bolzoni *et alii* 2015), from 2014 onwards squatting movements in Rome have been forced to stop squatting new buildings. As a consequence, if the route to becoming a squatter used to begin at the entrance to a new building, where a new space was occupied together with other people in the same housing situation, and thus sanctioned the achievement of the status of squatter for everyone, today, given the lack of availability of space, it is possible to earn that status only in the field, through an incubation period of varying duration aimed at integration into an already existing squatting community.

PHOTO 4: Child squatters (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)

The entrance requirements can therefore be defined as a rite of passage, which according to Arnold Van Gennep's famous tripartition (1909) could be schematized as follows. First, there is a preliminary phase, a period of segregation from a previous way of life represented by the moment in which the potential squatter turns to an internal office called *Tutela sociale* (Social protection), jointly run by squatters and external activists. Then, if it is established that he or she really needs a space and the *Tutela* approves his or her application, the *Tutela* then needs to discuss this with the *Comitato* (committee), a group of squatters elected annually by other squatters and responsible for the building management. After this step, the application will be discussed again at the squat assembly and at the *Consiglio*, a small internal council where once a week all the *comitati* of the movement's squats meet and where the potential squatter presents him- or herself. Immediately after, the liminal phase then begins, the state of transition

---

[2] Legislative Decree n. 47/2014, that denies anyone who squats the right to apply for residency. This makes it harder for people in squats to access basic social services such as a family doctor, and impossible for them to pay for utility bills.

from one status to another in which the squatter is only a temporary guest with a room in the building who begins contributing on a daily basis to the community's well-being and activities. Finally, there used to be a post-liminal phase, which for some coincided with obtaining social housing through the struggle – and therefore exiting the 'squat system' – which today no longer exists, since after the Lupi Decree for a squatter it is no longer possible to obtain a council flat. What now happens at this stage is that the 'candidate' becomes a full-fledged squatter accepted by the whole community, rather than a beneficiary of public housing. Being a squatter, after 2014, has therefore become a condition of permanent liminality: that is to say, as Arpad Szakolczai pointed out, "when any of the phases in this sequence [of separation, liminality and re-aggregation] become frozen, [it is] as if a film stopped at a particular frame" (2000: 220). A spatial 'stretching' of liminality (Thomassen 2014: 14) that is simultaneously accompanied by a precarization process, both individual and social.

To put it another way: whereas people in a situation of housing emergency previously entered squatted buildings motivated by individual need, and left only when they managed to gain a council house through the struggle, in today's squats in Rome the liminal phase is actually frozen, as it coincides with that of 'finally' achieving squatter status, therefore a further extension and chronicization of their liminal housing status compared to the rest of society. Liminality became in this way a chronicized process, a stable period of transition during which, as Bjørn Thomassen has written, "the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behavior are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction" (2014: 1). The anthropological challenge then becomes understanding how individuals, as parts of social groups or societies, undergo "chronic transitions", how they live through the uncertainties of the constant in-between and how they eventually come out of it.

If it is true, as Laura Mugnani argues, that the practice of squatting is driven by imagination as it is endowed with a creative character that "contrary to 'fantasy' involves the (often collective) realization of an idea" (Mugnani 2017: 180), then the different meanings that squatters give to their personal idea of home can also be translated into actions and practices with an agency, an ability to act and to feel at home according to one's own personal life project within the community of *Santa Croce*. For many squatters, for example, living in a squat is an action "aimed at seeking recognition" (Manocchi 2012: 160), as it is considered a strategy for obtaining a form of social legitimacy even before a legal one becomes possible (Mugnani 2017: 183); for others, however, living in a squat can also mean an attempt to achieve for themselves the privilege of being invisible (Appadurai 2003: 50). From this point of view, the liminal phase represented by the final achievement of squatter status (and, consequently, by the chronicization of their liminality within an experience of stable precarity like *Santa Croce*) could mean for many the ability to exercise effective power in the city in invisible ways, by having access to a roof, to people, relations and resources that do not necessarily have to be advertised. Squats in Rome, which provide precarious housing conditions but at the same time the possibility of settling down without having to pay rent, represent in this sense for many a guarantee of invisibility, as well as a political practice that legitimizes their condition of material and socio-economic deprivation.

Many of those who feel more comfortable with their current life experience in the squat – both Italians and migrants – already have a chronically precarious housing story, which has often forced them to move from one house to another without ever reaching a satisfactory economic condition that would allow them to escape precariousness. This experience is particularly widespread among singles, who represent the excluded par excellence on public housing lists. For those accustomed to moving from one place to another, as squatters or barely able to afford a rent, the simple fact of living in a place like *Santa Croce* for more than five years can then represent an index of achieved stability and a way to legitimize their social condition. This is the case of Mirko[3], a forty-year-old squatter from Rome who grew up in the peripheral *Tor Bella Monaca* neighborhood, where his family managed to squat a council house in the late 1980s. After an adolescence spent either in social centers or travelling the world, Mirko found stability and a partner, with whom he had a son, before separating and finding himself once again in a condition of housing precarity. After a year staying in friends' homes and his car, an acquaintance who lived in another Action squat hosted him there for six months, at the end of which *Santa Croce* was occupied. When he moved to *Santa Croce*, he initially found himself in a new and strange situation but he soon managed to acclimatize and feel at ease:

---

[3] The names of the interviewees are pseudonyms.

> At first, I couldn't even imagine what it would be like to live in a place like this... a multiethnic place, with many people and many cultures. But I have to admit that today for me everyone in the squat is like a family. They are part of my family. Even if I didn't bond with many of them, but you know, there is habit, there is the simple fact of having done things together, the demonstrations, the fights against the police ... in other words, we fought for this place, and now I love them like they were my family... I don't know how to explain it. (March 20, 2019)

A process, that of finally feeling himself at home, which was by no means immediate:

> In the beginning, I was here as a guy from Rome who grew up in the suburbs, with a certain type of life ... I felt like I was entering a world apart, very different from my reality, from my city. When I was out with my friends I was myself, but as soon as I came back to the squat ... they didn't understand me, they didn't understand me and we didn't understand each other, because, you know ... Peruvians, Nigerians, Romanians, Albanians ... there are so many ethnic groups ... and when I moved in I felt like I was in a completely strange situation. It was strange but also beautiful... I lived it with curiosity, like a new experience, which didn't bother me. I have always cultivated my habits and I continue to cultivate them, including friendships. But here it's home. That is... now, for me, *Santa Croce* is my home, it feels like home. (March 20, 2019)

From a political point of view, the fact that he has always lived in the suburbs and the positive approach he takes towards his current housing situation has meant that in his future housing projects, he fully embraces the cause of Spin Time, specifically that of regenerating the building with the aim of legalizing their experience and transforming the squat into a social housing model:

> Like many other people here, I am fighting to get a house in the future. We have a regeneration project, here in *Santa Croce*... a project to regenerate this building... and if in the future things go well, we will take the apartments here, without being moved into a peripheral neighborhood as usual. I am fighting for this and I agree with everything that is moving in this political direction, even if I believe that there are many other people who are perhaps exploiting the situation while it lasts and who will maybe return to their country one day. But I don't care, this is my struggle. (March 20, 2019)

Nonetheless, unlike Mirko, there are many other squatters who do not feel at home at all:

> *What does it mean for you to feel at home?*

> Feel at home? *Tener un lugar*. A place where I can move around freely and spontaneously, for which I am responsible. A place where I can say: this is my house because I bought it, because I paid for it with my money. That is why I said that this is not my house, because I am not paying for it! I don't feel I can do whatever I want here because I don't pay, I just live in a community with many other people. (June 10, 2019)

Grace is a teacher from Venezuela who moved to Italy just over a year ago to reunite with her husband, a man who has lived in Italy and in *Santa Croce* right from the start. Grace is therefore one of the few so-called latecomers and has never experienced anything similar, either residential or political, to her current life in the building. When I asked her if she felt at home, she replied that her apartment was a simple arrangement used exclusively for sleeping, as she had no cooking facilities or the privacy of her own bathroom[4]. The fact that her mother-in-law was also present in her family unit, in the room next door that had a kitchenette, meant that all the meals were cooked by her husband's mother. This contributed to making Grace feel she lacked full control over her life and daily activities. It made her feel dependent and deprived of the privacy that only an apartment that she paid for with her own money could guarantee her. For these reasons, the astonishment – as well as the disappointment – of finding herself in such a situation, aggravated by the nominally illegal status of the place, initially shocked her, and it took a few months for her to manage this, by finally accepting her condition and learning how to adapt to it. An adaptation that she defined as a "*doble moral*":

---

[4] In *Santa Croce*, squatters have to share restrooms and kitchens with the other inhabitants on their floor, since they do not have enough space inside their personal rooms.

[My husband] didn't tell me what the situation was. I came here and I said to him, "Oh my god, what have you done! Where have you brought me?" [...] But in the end this place helped me with integration. First of all, because this is a multiethnic place, so to speak, that we share with people of different nationalities, and I have to learn from them every day, to respect them and to work as a team with them, which is not always easy here ... [...] The truth is, I can't afford to pay rent yet. But in the meantime, I'm learning the language, I'm studying, and I'm living here as a first step… but this does not mean that you live badly here! I mean, if you have the possibility of not staying here, it's better. I don't know if you understand me… I feel like a *doble moral*. I try to respect the rules, to contribute as much as I can, and to go on learning from this experience.

So, are you taking this experience as a transitory, momentary experience?

Yes. It is helping me to integrate in the city and to know new things, to learn, because I am… let's say, when one crosses a border, it is as if it were about personal growth. Because every day that I'm here, I wake up and I have to study, learn the language, work hard to find a good job ... but I feel the need to get out of here, to progress. I only see it as a part of this point in my life. (10 June 2019)

The "*doble moral*", in this case, revealed her contrasting feelings about an experience that, on the one hand, she recognized as pedagogical, enriching, and functional for her integration in the city and country that were new to her, but which on the other hand worried her mainly because of its nominally illegal status. While she acknowledged the positive aspects of living in a squat, what seemed to lie behind the fact of not having enough space for herself and her husband, along with the awareness (and hope) that the accommodation would be provisional, was a conception of home linked to a cosmology of values typical of the neoliberal model, where without market intermediation she could never really feel at home. As far as Grace was concerned, the living space of *Santa Croce* was exclusively a daily lived space, since she had no interest in re-imagining it or intervening in a creative way in order to settle down within it.

Although Grace may seem to be an exception compared with the other squatters since she is a newcomer and is not really looking for housing stability in the building, her case nevertheless does represent an example of stable precarity insofar as she is living her current experience in *Santa Croce* as a means to integrate into society in Rome and in Italy, mainly through the daily improvement of her Italian language knowledge and through active participation in the squat's activities, which could also represent a way for her to find new job opportunities. Therefore, her wish to find stability in a precarious situation could be translated of course into leaving the squat but, at the same time, she is living her current housing condition as an act of citizenship (Dadusc *et alii* 2019), and as a formative process towards political subjectivity that could perform and prefigure an everyday practiced citizenship (Riccio 2011) despite her exclusion from normative citizenship.

From settled to unsettled. Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs

Elena Ostanel wrote that people create urban regeneration when the rights of use of a place are multiplied and directed to different audiences and when space (public or otherwise) becomes an available resource, capable of anchoring processes of empowerment and political activation (2017: 7). However, in order to do this, it is necessary to create a learning process both for institutions and for the varied social actors participating in the urban regeneration practice (*ibid.*). Following this definition, some squats[5] are trying to open themselves up to the surrounding territory both as a political defense strategy and also as an attempt to accommodate other forms of urban struggles. In this way, they are actually trying to find a new way to legitimate their political and housing experience in the eyes of local citizens and local government, making the squat not a privatized space but a resource available to everyone.

In this regard, Spin Time usually defines itself as a "cantiere di rigenerazione urbana", which could be translated as a self-made urban regeneration process: in other words, a project that is not restricted to guaranteeing a roof over people's heads, but whose ambition is to become an example of hospitality for migrants and a bottom-up social housing model, with the aim of regenerating the entire city and its political culture, regardless of the nominally illegal nature of the experience. This project is motivated

---

[5] Besides Spin Time, Metropoliz-MAAM and Porto Fluviale are two other examples of squats in Rome open to citizens (Boni, De Finis 2016).

by the fact that, as we have seen, after the implementation of the Lupi Decree it became harder to consider a squat a temporary experience, since no one who squats in a building can apply for public housing for at least five years (*art. 5 comma 1-bis*); in addition to this, such is the level of demand on council housing waiting lists that the average wait can be up to 18 years (Puccini, 2019).

This institutional stalemate has reinforced the condition of stable precarity of squatters, who, from 2014 onwards, started to live their squatting experience as a long-term one, however precarious it may be. For this reason, also in 2014, Action decided to create Spin Time in order to find a new political instrument capable of extracting them from their stable precarity and subsequently achieve the regeneration and legalization of the building, through recourse to social and cultural activities and services that would also be open to external users.

PHOTO 5*: The building (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)*

Indeed, another side effect of the Lupi Decree is that squatting movements in Rome have consequently had to stop squatting new buildings, as they are no longer able to use squat experiences as a means to negotiate public housing for squatters. This situation has therefore made the current route to becoming a squatter more complicated, since the availability of spaces inside squats has fallen. For these reasons, the squatters' determination to stabilize their precariousness through their political experience could also be interpreted as the daily production and refinement of a local moral economy, which is summarized as the "production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space" (Fassin 2009). In this case, since no new buildings are being squatted following the implementation of the Lupi Decree, squatters are constantly demonstrating on a daily basis why they 'deserve' a space in the squat, not through money or buying power as is the case in a normal condominium, but by using the struggle over housing and their contribution to the internal community as a form of payment or commodity money. In this way, they create a local value system based on principles that are to some extent different from the individualistic behaviors typical of competitive market mechanisms although it does borrow some aspects from the market – like having to deserve a space, for example, even though this may be through the struggle and active participation and not through their buying power. This is because, as Fassin pointed out, the moral economy also concerns institutions and neoliberal markets, whether political or economic, and there is never a clear opposition between the 'market' and the 'moral economy' (2015).

This local moral economy, however, is not always interpreted as such by outsiders. Many local and national newspapers often describe it in terms of moral blackmail or even a criminal organization. The squatters' main defense against this representation tends to run as follows:

> You have to explain it, you have to explain the rule system we have established for ourselves here in order to live together. Because otherwise, you know... many people, together... without rules this would not be an organized squat, but a place where the strongest tend to win. Here, you cannot prevail if you abuse the rules, you have to do all the things that everyone else does, you have to abide by the cleaning rota and stuff like that, because if you don't, you're politely asked to leave for a week. After all, in standard apartment blocks, you face eviction if you don't pay your arrears, so why shouldn't we be able to do the same? It's not that hard to see the reasoning behind all this: people live well here when they are organized and when there are rules for everyone, not when this kind of thing is left to the discretion of the few (Fabrizio, April 3, 2019).

According to Thomas Clay Arnold (2001), the grounds for politically significant moral indignation do not lie only or even predominantly at the level of economic or cultural conflict. They lie, instead, at the level of specific social goods (housing, in this case), therefore at the intersection of nested sets of meaning and value that are called into question by equally specific changes in circumstances. The local moral economy of *Santa Croce*/Spin Time, together with their internal rules of conduct and their continuous process of redefinition and redistribution of values and meanings associated with "living well", not only influence their political collective action, but also help them to define the framework of a local common sense or, especially in given historical moments, of a particular political ideology regarding how housing as a social good should be distributed in Rome – that is, as a right that must be earned through struggle and political activism rather than through money or buying power.

One of the most meaningful manifestations of their desire to make their moral economy and their political model of settlement a city-wide reality dates back to the 11th of May 2019, when the building found itself in the international media and political spotlight. This was the day that the Pope's almsgiver Cardinal Konrad Krajewski restored electricity to the building after the power supply had been cut off due to unpaid bills. The squatters then took to the streets to defend the manhole containing the electrical panel to stop the power being cut off again, and two police officers were sent to restore calm. The officers talked to the squatters, who had no intention of ending the sit-in. One of the officers told them: "I truly understand you, really… but society usually takes a particular direction, and we are the guarantors of that direction".

That statement unconsciously revealed the simultaneous presence of two variants of a moral economy related to housing as a social good. The first, represented in this case by the police officer's words, was very similar to that described by Didier Fassin (2015), where he affirmed that a moral world also existed for institutions and state representatives: while the latter are often regarded as an abstract and neutral bureaucratic entity, Fassin went against this commonly held belief by arguing that their moral economy is instead a situated and naturalized reality, embodied in the work of its agents and inscribed in the issues of its time. However, the second variant – that of the squatters –, in that specific circumstance, demanding that their community be allowed to use electricity at an agreed rate in the name of a local cosmology of values that affirms the legitimacy of their living condition, an opportunity that is in fact denied by the aforementioned Lupi Decree. In this way, they would have been able to guarantee a payment, however minimal, while also enabling their nominally illegal experiment inside the building to keep going.

The function of the protest was to reaffirm the squatters' aim of stabilizing their experience of precarity, by trying to gradually transform it into as legitimate and livable a condition as possible. Nevertheless, immediately after that night, what was a local incident became a national and international political issue. The media turned its social connotations into a broader issue of domestic policy, specifically the dispute between the Pope and the Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini over migrants. Cardinal Krajewski's was not in fact a random act, as he already knew the building thanks to the activities of a lay nun who helped the squatters on a daily basis. Spin Time nevertheless decided to use the incident as an opportunity to open up to the neighborhood and to the city, by welcoming other forms of struggles in an intersectional way and by organizing activities and services for all citizens, not just squatters.

If we consider culture not as a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction but, rather, more like a "tool kit" (Hannerz 1969: 186-88) from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action, then the *Santa Croce*/Spin Time community of squatters could also be defined as a 'culture of living together', since they share a tool kit made of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which

they may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems, like that of using shared housing precariousness as a starting point before transforming themselves into a political subject. In this regard, Ann Swidler wrote that culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct strategies of action (1986) since culture is, according to this interpretation, the publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meanings (Kessing 1974). Therefore, Swidler identifies two models through which culture shapes action: settled periods, when culture independently influences action by providing resources from which people can construct diverse lines of action; unsettled periods, when explicit ideologies directly govern action, but structural opportunities for action determine which among competing ideologies survive in the long run.

PHOTO 6*: The sit-in, right after the Pope's almsgiver restored electricity to the building (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)

Squatting and, generally speaking, the 'traditional' system of squats in Rome, intended as both an initial act and as a continuous housing process, was for a long time in a settled period, as it consisted of a set of sedimented actions and strategies and aspects of culture that squatters learned over the years through the struggle and the internal life of squats. At the same time, the squatters' values and moral economy did not unilaterally constitute their mode of action by defining its aims once and for all, but rather the squatters continually perfected the regulation of action within historically consolidated ways of life, albeit dynamic and chronically precarious. As a result of the change in the political scenario triggered by the Lupi Decree and the gesture made by the Pope's almsgiver, the informal regeneration model that Spin Time has since embarked upon effectively instigated the start of an unsettled period, which has seen it transform itself into an explicit and articulated system of meanings oriented towards the modeling of new forms of action and struggle which as yet do not come naturally.

Based on this interpretation, the *Santa Croce*/Spin Time culture and, consequently, their action, reached a turning point that night: they were passing from a settled period to an unsettled period, namely from a phase in continuity with the past to one that occurs in the face of rapid social change. The difference between the two phases could be summarized, then, as the difference between culture's role in sustaining existing strategies of action and its role in constructing new ones (Swidler 1986: 278). A new phase that they decided to welcome and spread across the neighborhood through cultural and social

initiatives and some patrimonialization acts, like that of writing Cardinal Krajewski's name on the manhole cover where he restored electricity, as a distinctive way to memorialize what happened there and why.

Some (precarious) conclusions

The experiences of stable precarity as recounted by some squatters, despite differing greatly in terms of personal trajectories and aspirations, all challenge the idea of 'crisis' and 'emergency' as a temporary disorder, as a momentary malformation in the flow of things. At the same time, the Pope's almsgiver episode has shown how the squat now finds itself at a political turning point, since Spin Time is trying to overcome the condition of stable precarity lived by squatters by opening the building to the territory (including the Catholic Church) in order to legitimize their living and political experience and transform the building into a bottom-up social housing model that could potentially be adopted elsewhere.

By shifting the analytical focus from crisis in context to crisis as context (Vigh 2008), housing precarity in Rome would then become definable as a condition, rather than as an episode. Even if "most of the time we imagine such precarity to be an exception to how the world works", in fact, "precarity is the condition of our time" and for this reason, as anthropologists, "we have no choice other than to look for life in this ruin" (Tsing 2015: 6). Given its state as a discipline strongly rooted in the field, together with a particular attention on theory and policy, anthropology with its ethnographic approach could become the perfect interpreter of the consequences of large-scale global processes on lived life, since these processes are often forged at such a distance from the lives they affect that they appear to be unrelated and indifferent to the effects they produce (Ferguson 1999; Nordstrom 1997, Vigh 2008).

Photo 7*:* The manhole cover where the building's electrical system is found. After that night, it has been 'patrimonialized' by squatters as a place of worship (Photo by Chiara Cacciotti)

Our goal would then increasingly become that of focusing on rendering the social and individual sense of events, through life stories and narratives intended as processes through which people construct a meaningful relationship between their present and, as in this case, their housing future (Appadurai 2013). Ethnographic sensitivity, together with anthropological reflexivity, would allow us to see how people struggle to find their bearings and try to control and balance their precarious lives, producing in

this way future scenarios and terrains of action by using imagination as "an organized field of social practices, a form of negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai 1996: 187).

The willingness of *Santa Croce*/Spin Time's squatters to settle down in a precarious context, makes them part of a broader effort to imagine and to practice an alternative housing model, which nevertheless can still be defined as a state of ordered disorder (Taussig 1992). In this way, even a single life story affected by chronic precarity would make us aware of the relationship between the personal and the social, demonstrating to us that an individual story can never be analytically defined once and for all since every life is composed of many overlapping stories. As anthropologists, in making our syntheses we should never lose sight of the complexity of that which we are trying to represent, and consequently avoid interpreting the lives we discover in our fieldwork only as 'precarious' and, for this reason, adversely affected by chronic desperation and bewilderment. In this way, maybe, we would start thinking through precarity as something that also makes life possible.

REFERENCES

AGERGAARD, Sine – UNGRUHE, Christian
2016   Ambivalent Precarity: Career Trajectories and Temporalities in Highly Skilled Sports Labor Migration from West Africa to Northern Europe. *Anthropology of Work Review* 37(2): 67–78.

APPADURAI, Arjun
1996   *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
2003   Illusion of Permanence: Interview with Arjun Appadurai. *Perspecta* 34: 44–52.
2013   *The Future as Cultural Fact. Essays on the Global Condition.* London and New York: Verso.

ARNOLD, Thomas Clay
2001   Rethinking Moral Economy. *American Political Science Review* 95(1): 85–95.

BELLONI, Milena – FRAVEGA, Enrico – GIUDICI, Daniela
2020   Fuori dall'accoglienza: insediamenti informali di rifugiati tra marginalità e autonomia. *Politiche Sociali* 2: 225-244.

BENJAMIN, Walter
1999   [1968] *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico Press.

BOLZONI, Magda – GARGIULO, Enrico – MANOCCHI, Michele
2015   The Social Consequences of the Denied Access to Housing for Refugees in Urban Settings: the Case of Turin, Italy. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 15(4): 400-417.

BONI, Fabrizio – DE FINIS, Giorgio
2016   *Space Metropoliz. L'era delle migrazioni esoplanetarie*. Roma: Bordeaux.

BOSI, Lorenzo – ZAMPONI, Lorenzo
2015   Direct Social Actions and Economic Crises: The Relationship Between Forms of Action and Socio-economic Context in Italy. *Partecipazione e Conflitto* 8(2): 367–391.

BOUILLON, Florence
2011   *Le squat: problème social ou lieu d'émancipation?*. Paris: ULM.

BOURDIEU, Pierre
1998   *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. New York: New Press.

BUTLER, Judith
2004   *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso.

CACIAGLI, Carlotta
2019   Housing Squats as 'Educational Sites of Resistance': The Process of Movement Social Base Formation in the Struggle for the House. *Antipode* 0(0): 1–20.

CATTANEO, Claudio – ENGEL-DI MAURO, Salvatore
2015   Urban Squats as Eco-social Resistance to and Resilience in the Face of Capitalist Relations: Case Study from Barcelona and Rome. *Partecipazione e Conflitto* 8(2): 343–366.

DADUSC, Deanna – GRAZIOLI, Margherita – MARTÍNEZ, Miguel A.
2019   Introduction: Citizenship as Inhabitance? Migrant Housing Squats Versus Institutional Accommodation. *Citizenship Studies* 23(6): 521-539.

DELLA PORTA, Donatella – HÄNNINEN, Sakari – SIISIÄINEN, Martti – SILVASTI, Tina
2015   The Precarization Effect. In *The New Social Division. Making and Unmaking Precariousness*. Donatella Della Porta & Sakari Hänninen & Martti Siisisäinen & Tina Silvasti (eds). London: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp.1-24.

ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland
2016   *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change*. London: Pluto Press.

ESTROFF, Sue
1993   Identity, Disability and Schizophrenia: The Problem of Chronicity. In *Knowledge, Power and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life*. Shirley Lindenbaum & Margaret Lock (eds). Berkeley: University of California Press.

ETTLINGER, Nancy
2007   Precarity Unbound. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 32(3): 319–40.

FASSIN, Didier
2009   Les économies morales revisitées. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64(6): 1237–1266.
2015   *At the heart of the State. The moral world of institutions*. London: Pluto Press.

FERGUSON, James
1999   *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

FUDGE, Judy – STRAUSS, Kendra
2013   *Temporary Work, Agencies and Unfree Labour: Insecurity in the New World of Work*. London: Routledge.

FULLER, Duncan
1999   Part of the Action, or 'Going native'? Learning to Cope with the 'Politics of Ontegration'. *Area* 31(3): 221–227.

GIORGI, Sabina – FASULO, Alessandra
2013   Transformative Homes. Squatting and Furnishing as Sociocultural Projects. *Home Cultures* 10(2): 111–134.

HANNERZ, Ulf
1969   *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community*. New York: Columbia University Press.

KATZ, Cindi
1994   Playing the field: questions of fieldwork in geography. *Professional Geographer* 46(1): 73-80.

KESSING, Roger Martin
1974   Theories of Culture. In *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, Inc. Pp. 73-97.

KOSELLECK, Reinhart
2002   *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

LAZZARATO, Maurizio
2004   From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life. *Ephemera − Theory & Politics in Organization* 4: 187−208.

MANOCCHI, Michele
2012   *Richiedenti asilo e rifugiati politici. Percorsi di ricostruzione identitaria: il caso torinese.* Milan: Franco Angeli.

MILLAR, Kathleen
2014   The Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Cultural Anthropology* 29 (1): 32−53.

MORINI, Cristina − FUMAGALLI, Andrea
2010   Life Put to Work: Towards a Life Theory of Value. *Ephemera − Theory & Politics in Organization* 10: 234−252.

MUGNANI, Laura
2017   Attivisti, migranti e forme di lotta per la casa La vita sociale di un 'Coordinamento cittadino' nella Roma contemporanea. *Antropologia* 4(3): 179−194.

NEILSON, Brett − ROSSITER, Ned
2008   Precarity as a Political Concept, Or, Fordism as Exception. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25 (7−8): 51−72.

NORDSTROM, Carolyn
1997   *A Different Kind of Warstory*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

OLIVIER DE SARDAN, Jean-Pierre
1995   La politique du terrain. Sur la production des données en anthropologie. *Enquête* 1: 71−109.

OSTANEL, Elena
2017   *Spazi fuori dal comune. Rigenerare, includere, innovare*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

PIERRET, Régis
2013   "Qu'est-ce que la précarité?" *Socio. La nouvelle revue des sciences sociales* 2 (December): 307−30.

PRUIJT, Hans
2012   Squatting in Europe. *Partecipazione e Conflitto* 1:19−44.

PUCCINI, Enrico
2019   Roma e le case popolari: i tre luoghi comuni da sfatare. Accessed online, December, 18- 2020: https://www.romasette.it/roma-e-le-case-popolari-i-tre-luoghi-comuni-da-sfatare/

RICCIO, Bruno − RUSSO, Monica
2011   Everyday Practiced Citizenship and the Challenges of Representation: Second-generation Associations in Bologna. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 16(3): 360-372).

ROUTLEDGE, Paul
1996   The Third Space as Critical Engagement. *Antipode* 28(4), 399-419.

SALSANO, Fernando
2008   Edilizia residenziale pubblica, assistenza sociale e controllo della popolazione nella Roma del primo Novecento (1903-1940). In *Città e campagna: un binomio da ripensare*. Gianluca Fiocco & Roberta Morelli (eds). Rome: Viella. Pp. 95−118.

SCHIERUP, Carl-Ulrik − MUNCK, Ronaldo − LIKIC-BRBORIC, Branka − NEERGAARD, Anders
2015   *Migration, Precarity, and Global Governance: Challenges and Opportunities for Labour.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

STANDING, Guy
2014   *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

STANLEY, Liz – WISE, Sue
1993   Breaking out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology. London: Routledge.

SWIDLER, Ann
1986   Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51(2): 273–286.

SZAKOLCZAI, Arpad
2000   *Reflexive Historical Sociology*. London: Routledge.

TAUSSIG, Michael
1992   *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge.

THOMASSEN, Bjørn
2014   *Liminality and the Modern. Living Through the In-Between*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate.

TOSI, Antonio
2009   Retoriche dell'abitare e costruzione sociale delle politiche. *Meridiana. Abitare* XIX(62): 37–53.

TSING, Anna Lowenhaupt
2015   *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

VAN GENNEP, Arnold
1924   [1909] *Les rites des passage*. Paris: Librairie Stock.

VERENI, Piero
2013   La porta di casa. Lo spazio domestico e di vicinato in una occupazione abitativa romana. In *Sensibilia 6 – Cose*. Manrica Rotili & Marco Tedeschini (eds). Milan and Udine: Mimesis Edizioni. Pp. 311–326.
2015   Cosmopolitismi liminari. Strategie di identità e categorizzazione tra cultura e classe nelle occupazioni a scopo abitativo a Roma. *ANUAC* 4(2): 130–156.

VIGH, Henrik
2006   [2003] *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. Oxford: Berghahn.
2008   Crisis and Chronicity: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuous Conflict and Decline. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 73(1): 5-24.

WHITE, Susan Reynolds
1997   *Questioning Misfortune: The Pragmatics of Uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fredens Havn. Politics of space and architecture in a little floating community in Copenhagen

Giuseppe Mazzarino, *Università di Milano-Bicocca*

ABSTRACT

The article reflects on the importance given to the concept of space within the formation of political identity among marginal groups living in an urban context. The case study is a small 'floating community' called Fredens Havn, located in the city center of Copenhagen. The main aim of this article is to analyze the practices of space creation, by focusing on the architecture and design of the self-built floating houses and infrastructures. The purpose of this ethnography is to consider space and the built environment as a language used by Fredens Havn's settlers to communicate their presence to the rest of the city. In this regard we use the emic concept of 'take up space' applied to indicate those practices in which space is used as a language to communicate the instances and identities of marginal groups living in urban environments.

KEYWORDS

architecture, material culture, semiotics, space, urban studies, urban anthropology

BIO

(PhD in Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, 2019). In the 2011 he obtained a master's degree in Semiotics at the University of Bologna, in which he actively collaborates as a member of the C.U.B.E. (Bolognese Ethnosemiotic University Center) research center. His research interests range from urban anthropology to legal anthropology and from the semiotics of space to the relationships between semiotics and anthropology. He has published several contributions on ethnosemiotics and has held several university lectures at the University of Bologna. Since 2020 he has collaborated with the specialization course in Communication Design at the University of Ferrara.

g.mazzarino@campus.unimib.it

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present an ethnographic case in which the use of spatial resources and the construction of places take a central role in the dialogue between citizens and institutions. I will try to describe how the management of spatial resources can help improve the conditions of recognition (Appadurai 2014) and of poor or disadvantaged groups within urban contexts.

Living means organizing and building space, both physically and semiotically. Especially for marginal groups, the organization of space acquires a fundamental role in affirming their presence and identity in the urban context. So what does it mean to inhabit urban space for these groups?

Urban policies today do not allow groups in conditions of economic or housing poverty to exercise their right to inhabit the space of the city. These groups are increasingly marginalized and are denied their right to use space (Lefebvre 1970).

The example that I am going to offer describes the ability of some groups *to take up space*[1] within the city through the management of spatial resources and the semiotic construction of places. Space itself is used as a language that assumes a fundamental role for those who live in it, in the construction of identity and in the management of conflicts. The manipulation of space becomes the tool through which to affirm a political position and resist neoliberalist policies, giving life to «new forms of agency» to try to be recognized (Appadurai 2013). The subjects of the case that I am going to present are the inhabitants of a small floating community by the name of Fredens Havn[2].

Fredens Havn is a housing community that stands on the waters of a canal in the city center of Copenhagen. This alternative housing experiment, in addition to being an evocative model, has a strong political value within the space in which it stands. A true laboratory of active citizenship which contrasts the mechanism of control and institutional urban policies (Malighetti 2012: 873).

Fredens Havn was born as a response to gentrification and territorial control processes that have transformed the urban space of the northeastern area of the Christianshavn district. Since 1971, this part of the city has hosted a well-known autonomous reality, the Freetown of Christiania. It was the redevelopment of this area which led to the birth of Fredens Havn as a housing settlement.

Christiania originated from a protest against housing poverty and was immediately available to marginalized classes who lived in poverty, or to people looking for alternative ways of life (Steiger 2018). After the closure of the Freetown borders, the imposition of a taxation system and the consequent impossibility for the new poor classes of accessing Christiania, many of the residents, or people who are now forbidden from accessing the large former hippy enclave, have created new housing realities on the edge of the Freetown area.

Fredens Havn was born precisely because of this closure of borders and census of the population of Christiania and has the sole objective of making a home, giving life to a particular housing model in line with some fundamental values for the inhabitants: living in contact with nature, self-management of resources and self-sustainability.

Building the environment and housing are the main activities of the community. The particular use of the available spatial resources, the resemantization of some spaces and the construction of houses are actions which, in addition to affirming a political belief, manifest the inhabitants' desire to improve their "conditions of recognition" (Appadurai 2014). These actions will be examined as semiotic processes of space construction that convey meanings and define the identity of the group.

Fredens Havn as a political space

Fredens Havn is situated in the Erdkehlgraven canal close to the northern border of the Freetown of Christiania, in Copenhagen. It is a floating community made up of several piers which has about fifty

---

[2] The choice of the name Fredens Havn derives from a debate on the terms in which the community is indicated by different actors. Formally the community is recognized by the name of Fredens Havn (Port of Peace); the inhabitants of the city of Copenhagen often referred to the place using different names: 'Pirate Bay' or 'Pirate Harbor'. The inhabitants of the community, since not all the occupied space is formally part of the Fredens Havn project, use the term Harbor. Regarding this, an interview revealed that: "We use the term Harbor, because harbor in Danish means that you are at home. Copenhagen is a port (is a harbor) [...]".

people of different age, sex and nationality[3] living in it. Born as a consequence of the 'normalization' of the Christiania community (Amouroux 2009; Thörn 2011; Vanolo and Coppola 2015; Nielsen 2020), Fredens Havn hosts people in conditions of housing poverty who have been denied access to the Freetown after the agreement signed between the inhabitants of Christiania, formally united in a foundation, and the municipality of Copenhagen (Amouroux 2009).

FIGURE 1: Pilen, a pier of Fredens Havn (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

The agreement provides for the purchase by the inhabitants of part of the area, the payment of a rent for the remaining part of the occupied territory, the upgrading to conformity with the law of self-built houses[4] in the neighborhood. In addition, a series of redevelopment works are planned for the physical space, such as the construction of a public lighting system, the construction of a cycle path connected to the city center and the construction of some new residences in one of the areas adjacent to the north-eastern border which will also host a restaurant linked to a well-known Danish chain[5].

The process of normalization of the area and the introduction of private investors in Christiania, led to the closure of the borders and the census of the inhabitants. All these actions to manage the city's territory fully reflect the neoliberal ideal (Harvey 2005; Amoroux 2009; Thörn 201). Since 2004 there have also been many raids by the police to stop the drug dealing that takes place in the neighborhood.

For many years the city of Copenhagen has been pursuing a typical policy in the redevelopment projects of European cities, with greater importance placed on city users, mainly tourists, to the detriment of residents. These operations often create effects of de-subjectivization and depersonalization of places.

Fredens Havn had a period of strong growth, both in extension and in number of inhabitants, just after 2011. What makes this community an interesting case for discussing the processes of creating space is, in the first place, the fact that it was born as a form of resistance to the loss of the right to live the spaces of the city. Secondly, Fredens Havn is a very clear example of regaining community values that were lost due to the redevelopment of a territory through a particular use of spatial resources.

A third reason, which makes this small community a case study of considerable interest, lies behind the particular political status of the area in which it stands. The Erdkehlgraven canal has in fact been referred to as 'gray zone' by a lawyer following Fredens havn's case after the Danish Costal Authority reported the occupation.

---

[3] The age of the inhabitants varies from 19 to 61 years. There are no families or children due, above all, to the lack of a water and electricity supply network and efficient sanitation.
[4] The self-built houses in the Christiania area have a symbolic, as well as aesthetic, value of considerable interest. They arose as a form of protest between the 70s and 80s against real estate speculation and the lack of affordable housing in the city of Copenhagen.
[5] The restaurant was opened in May 2020 after the article was written.

In this case, a gray zone means an area of the city that is difficult to manage politically. As a matter of fact, Erdkehlgraven has a complex history, also starting from a redevelopment process. The canal is part of the Holmen area, a series of islands that form the northeastern part of the Christianshavn district.

FIGURE 2: Police raid of 16 June 2016 (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

Until 1993 it was a military area, as it housed some activities of the Danish Navy, whose main headquarters is still located in the Nyholm district, in the outermost part of Holmen. The whole area was used for training purposes and as a shipyard. In the early 90's many of the navy's activities moved to the cities of Korsør and Frederikshavn, and the Holmen territory was bought by the city and redeveloped[6].

After the urban redevelopment operations in the Holmen area – which has now become partly a residential area, partly a place of tourist attraction by hosting Copenhagen Street Food and the new Operaen theater – the canal was opened to boat traffic, especially to facilitate passage of the boats that accompany tourists on the famous 'boat tours'. This opening legitimizes the presence of boats in the Erdkehlgraven section. Fredens Havn, having no fixed structures, but only floating platforms around which boats, houseboats and floating houses gather, does not break any law. The 'physical presence' of the community is completely legal.

Before going into the theoretical considerations that I will address in this article, it is necessary to understand how Fredens Havn has managed over time to be recognized by the institutions as an independent reality. To do this it is important to make another consideration about the area where the community is located. The exact point where Fredens Havn stands is also the point where the winds of the city's canals, coming from north and south, cross each other, making that stretch the place where all the waste transported by the city's canals gathers. Because of this, often many small or medium-sized boats are transported to that point during storms. From the stories of the inhabitants, one of the first activities carried out in the area consisted precisely in the collection of rubbish deposited on the banks

[6] Most of the information on Holmen was gathered from conversations with local citizens, particularly with the president of the Fredens Havn association. As a source for historical data, I used the material available in the online historical archive: http://www.marinehist.dk/MHT/2010-MHT-Nyholm.pdf.

and the removal and renovation of the semi-sunken boats present in the canal. The collected material was then selected and used for the construction of the piers or floating houses, or for the renovation of the boats.

Starting from this practice of collecting and reusing resources, the physical space of the community began to take shape. From the story of one of the inhabitants what emerges is that:

> When I first came here, I saw all the rubbish that was there and started picking it up. I divided it, and took the material that I could use to build my house, which was here at the time, on the shore. My boat still had to be fixed, I could not yet live in it. At the beginning we were few, but it all started spontaneously, we had no intention of building this space, nor could we think that all this would happen within ten years. After the construction of Else, perhaps we began to understand that something was possible and that this place was special. We built Fredens Havn and now nobody can take it away from us.
>
> (Conversation with E. of 04/2016)

Fredens Havn is about one kilometer in length following Refshalevej, a road that connects Princessesgade with the north-east tip of Amager.

Around each pier there are boats and houseboats. The first pier to be built was Esben's Place, after the construction of the Else and Krydse (the Cross) platform. After Esben's Place, other piers began to take shape, including F.'s place, Donkey Island and Pilen. Along with the development of the piers, the first occupants also began to inhabit the adjacent land, on the other side of Refshalevej. A hill that borders with the Freetown of Christiania and which takes the name of Garden.

FIGURE 3: The Garden (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

This space is a garden on two levels, the land is owned by a private individual, who however has granted the Fredens Havn association its use for activities related to the community's daily life. The space is in fact used as a public place; it has the function of a small square. The Garden is also used as a place to have a shared meal, as it is the only space in the community capable of hosting a good number of people and where you can safely light a fire. It consists of an outdoor area on two levels and an indoor

area called Office, which consists of a large skurvogn (a mobile home) that lies on a resistant base of wooden planks.

Garden hosts the group meetings that are held weekly. The peculiarity of Garden is that although it is on land, it has been modified to take the shape of a boat. The idea was born following an event that occurred during the eviction notice of September 2016.

A policeman in charge of posting the eviction order on the objects to be removed on the channel, also affixed the notification on some material in Garden obtained from a sunken boat, which was to be used for the construction of the communal kitchen. When asked why that piece of boat had also been marked for eviction, the policeman replied: "For the intention". The answer, which initially sparked amazement, was then accepted as a suggestion to furnish Garden in a way that would recall a boat, to affirm the identity and ownership of the space. Garden indeed has a stern, a bow and a main mast to which the flag of Denmark is affixed. It is also furnished with small objects that recall the world of boats and navigation. For its being a 'space belonging to all', intended as a place that unites the inhabitants of the different piers, Garden is the most significant place for the collective life of the community, a place with a very high symbolic value. It represents the political space, the space of common decisions, of sharing and respect for common goods. All inhabitants are encouraged to work on the vegetable garden, the construction of the infrastructures, as well as the preparation of food and to participate in meetings. As a system for political choices, the group uses the 'ting assembly' method (Ingold 2013). The *ting* is a very ancient political system used prevalently in Germanic societies that put consensus as the only form of access to decisions. This political system enhances the freedom of decision and expression of the individual. The political choice of using the 'ting' system is derived from the Freetown of Christiania.

The choice to hold assemblies at Garden is not accidental, but is intrinsic to the very concept of 'ting' and to the relationship that this term has with the 'landscape'. The morphology of the territory where the Garden is located recalls a 'mound'[7], as a matter of fact, this space is characterized by having been created at the foot of the hill that borders with the 'wildest' part of the Freetown of Christiania.

The continuous references to the Scandinavian tradition build a highly symbolic landscape. This acquires the values that are given to it by the inhabitants' activities, which are organized and regulated during the assemblies. It is important to note how, in light of these considerations and of what was mentioned previously, the Garden's furnishing supports the concept of 'domestic landscape'. Even the presence of the vegetable garden, and therefore the practice of 'farming', recall the domestic space in Scandinavian tradition. As we can read in *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture* by Tim Ingold, the 'farm work' was the practice that gave shape to the landscape, a real spatialization practice that builds the space giving it meaning.

Assemblies, or meetings, are a time to share opinions and points of view on the political and economic decisions of the community. Often, they take place in the evening, in order to allow all the inhabitants to attend. The evening hours are favorable especially for members who work outside the community. Garden's architecture reflects this ideal of sharing thanks to the presence of a large communal table that everyone can use to carry out their work safely, as well as the use of common tools and materials that are placed in the back of the Office. The same goes for the benches built to form a sort of stalls so that everyone can have a good view when someone takes the floor during the meetings. The space is managed to suggest an idea of horizontality. Each level in which it develops is an area in itself, dedicated to a particular activity.

Fredens Havn's space is organized through juxtapositions that intertwine the physical and political dimensions of space. Indoor/Outdoor, Water/Earth, categories that organize the physical space, for example, come into contact, on a political level, with the Private/Public or Central/Peripheral categories.

The organization of the community's space, through the possible relationships between these categories, takes on real meaning if we take into account that these elements are inserted in a macro-category that opposes the previously identified dimensions of domestic and recreational landscape, which in turn are determined by the strategic and tactical development of the city. The architecture and built environment emphasize and enhance the characteristics of Fredens Havn as a space for domesticity

---

[7] The 'mounds', very widespread in Scandinavia as early as the Stone Age, are ancient tombs. The mound was then linked to the funeral cult of Norse paganism (Ingold 2013).

and for living. The struggle to conquer this space and these values is based on resistance actions that stage the domestic dimension in various ways.

The metaphor of 'Fredens Havn as a home' is also reflected in the way the inhabitants organize the occupied space. As a matter of fact, some inhabitants suggested that I read the physical shape and the structural organization of the community as if the boats were private rooms, while the piers and the Garden are corridors or living rooms. The considerations of the inhabitants regarding the metaphor that relates the entire space of the community with the typical structure of a house, derive from the use that is made of the various spaces: most boats are used almost exclusively to sleep or spend time in intimacy, due to the limited space available, while the piers and Garden are the places where you can carry out the rest of the daily activities, such as cooking, washing dishes or clothes, spending time together with others, discussing organizational issues and community policies etc.

FIGURE 4: Donkey Island (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

The beginning of the construction of the first infrastructures, the settlement of many boats in the area and the formalization of the group, immediately attracted the attentions of the institutions and citizens of the surrounding areas. In the following months, a dossier was drawn up by the city of Copenhagen which collects the voices of various actors or individual inhabitants of the area opposed to the development of the project.

The dossier often relies on the impact that Fredens Havn has had on the landscape, ruining its symmetry. Pejorative expressions are used towards the aesthetics of the community space, such as påsigende 'an eyesore'.

As a result of the dossier, a series of legal actions took place against the Fredens Havn association, for illegitimate occupation of public land and for the defacement of the landscape. The lawsuits were followed by eviction notifications from the Danish authorities.

The responses to these actions, still in progress and which often modify the group's relationships and internal stability, were the drafting of a document explaining the functions of some of the infrastructures, primarily the Else and Krydse platform and a series of initiatives to communicate to the rest of the city the values on which the community is based. These initiatives consist of land management and cleaning of the area occupied by the group.

FIGURE 5: Floating City (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

FIGURE 6: Canal Cleaning action (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

Making a house on water: Theory and practice of spatialization

Often the concept of space poses many problems in anthropology (Low 2009,1996). Arjun Appadurai and Margaret Rodman criticize the concept of space in anthropology (Appadurai 1988; Rodman 1985, 1992) believing that ethnographers often define space and spatiality as a setting in which natives are confined (Low 1998, 2009) . Reflecting on an anthropological theory of space therefore means engaging in the construction of a clear definition of the term 'space'. This must not be a mere construct used only to place an ethnographic description (Low 2009) but, in accordance with much literature in the sector, 'space' must be understood as a social construct that cannot neglect the historical, political and cultural background of the people who live in it (Rodman 1992). Paraphrasing Setha Low we can say that an anthropological theory of space "needs to be process-oriented, person-based, and allow for agency and new possibilities" (Low, 2009: 22). Setha Low herself, in the Companion of urban Anthropology (Nonini 2014), considers 'spatiality' and the spatial turn as the reason for a revival of urban studies in anthropology (Low 2014). The idea of space as a social construct refers to the priority of action, of human action as a tool for producing places. In this work I would like to use the term spatialization to indicate all the actions of production of places and semiotic construction of spaces. By this last expression I therefore mean that ability that places have to express and convey meanings. Spatialization, thus understood, takes on the characteristics of a true cultural ability of producing a sense of space.

The concept of spatialization, in this work, consists in considering the management of space and the representations of space as *events* that constitute a *discourse* (Ricoeur 1991) that can facilitate the dialogue between the inhabitants of Fredens Havn and the institutions. The term 'spatialization' derives from generative semiotics. According to Greimas and Courtés, spatialization means one of the three components of discursivization[8], which "it comprises procedures of spatial localization" which are used to also include procedures for spatial programming, thanks to which a linear disposition of partial spaces (obtained through localizations) is realized; this disposition conforms with the temporal programming of the narrative programs (Greimas Courtès 1979).

My aim is to borrow this term, freeing it from its meaning in relation to semiotics and implanting it in urban anthropology, to indicate all those 'human' processes of semiotic construction of space. In the case of Fredens Havn we will see how the relationship between water and earth structures a complex semiotic system which also implies questions related to the identity of the group.

Water is the element that most influences the land management practices of Fredens Havn, as well as the political actions of the community.

Living on water therefore allows a direct relationship with the element and the surrounding environment. Following the water's phases and rhythm means taking on some responsibilities towards the environment, therefore its respect and protection become fundamental values. Water acquires a social role. The element water is considered a real social actor within the community. F., who has lived in the community for many years, during a conversation on the 16th October 2016 reported: "The water has granted us all this. It has given us the opportunity to live here, in contact with nature and without breaking any law".

Water has therefore favored their occupation of the territory by helping citizens to 'act' in the space and be able to undertake a political and community action. It is the water which characterizes their living, proving to be an identity marker.

Marginal groups tend to build their own places away from the rest of the city. They build communities and places starting from values such as hospitality for people who live in the same conditions. They activate resistance practices that build new forms of right to live the space of the city, true "active citizenship laboratories" (Malighetti 2012) that redesign the conditions of existence of the inhabitants starting from their way of giving meaning to the inhabited space. Fredens Havn is the center of life of a group of people united by common and shared values, who do not feel integrated in the urban system in which they live and therefore ask to be recognized by the institutions as an autonomous reality. Welcoming everyone is an ethical value that characterizes the community: "no one should be excluded

---

[8] The term discursivization in generative semiotics indicates "procédures de mise en discours" (Greimas and Courtés, 1979) of semio-narrative structures, that is, of the deeper levels of the generative path of meaning. The discursivization consists of the procedures of attorialization, temporalization and spatialization.

because only the institutional system excludes and we are not part of it"[9]. The reversal of the center/periphery category is not only spatial but also concerns social, political and ethical aspects. All these aspects shape the identity of the group.

During the field period, a connection emerged several times between the choice of living on the water and the concept of freedom.

FIGURE 7: Floating self-made houses to Floating City (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

For the inhabitants of Fredens Havn, freedom is the result of individual actions dictated by ethical and political norms, by unwritten codes embedded in people. Freedom is also understood by the group as a message to be communicated through the use of particular canons, not only political but also aesthetic. The reference to architecture and to the practice of self-construction as an act of freedom and choice emerged decisively, especially during a meeting dated 14 December 2016, in which the problem of landscape defacing was addressed starting from the reading of the 2013 dossier. At this meeting, many difficulties arose in the attempt to define an aesthetic model of the community which would be able to respond to the accusations that identify Fredens Havn as 'an eyesore', or to the criticisms made by the residents of the neighboring areas that define the community with derogatory expressions such as: 'a floating landfill', 'a slum in the center of Copenhagen', 'a floating favela'[10].

During the meeting it was decided by mutual agreement to define the aesthetics of Fredens Havn as the result of both planning choices and use of the material dictated by 'simplicity', 'functionality', 'reuse' and 'sustainability'. The importance of identifying these aesthetic categories lies in the fact that the inhabitants read their own architecture, the inhabited space, as a support through which to convey, and consequently manifest, their ideals and values. In cases like these, architecture becomes a real language through which to trace the lines of a discourse that evokes a system of ethical, political, social and cultural values in continuous connection with each other.

---

[9] Interview with Esben B. of 29 October 2016.

[10] All expressions were reported by the workshop participants and are definitions used by the citizens of Copenhagen, in particular of the Holmen and Chrisitanshavn area, in relation to the community.

To better clarify this analytical approach, I borrow some considerations from semiotics which are very interesting if read from the point of view of anthropology of space. I'm referring, in particular, to an author who has dealt with the topic of space by constructing a semiotic theory starting from the interaction between subjects, spaces and built environment, Manar Hammad. In the text *Livre l'espace, Comprendre l'architecture. Essays sèmiotique* the semiologist tries various ways to discuss the problem of the architectural language's capability of building enunciation. Hammad's suggestion consists in examining architecture in its necessary and indispensable relationship with the subjects who use it and complete its signification process.

Hammad's proposal therefore consists in considering an analysis of space impossible without taking into account the subjects who produce the space and make it meaningful, conveying values and meanings through it.

The message that the inhabitants of Fredens Havn intend to convey through the space and its spatial, architectural and aesthetic organization regards the key concepts that emerged during these meetings. The daily practices of use and management of space therefore produce semiotics systems that directly involve different elements.

Through the dialogues on aesthetics, mainly held with Stephen, as an artist, and with Esben B., they proved to be of great interest in understanding some fundamental aspects of the community's intentions.

In the conversations with Stephen and Esben B., the adjective 'ugly', referring to some buildings around the Fredens Havn area, was justified by the material the object under consideration was made of, which, for this reason was not in harmony with nature and the surrounding environment. The architecture of the Holmen district, for example, is not aesthetically accepted by S. and Esben B. due to the fact that the materials used are not in harmony with the environment in which they are located. The reused material acquires a certain aesthetic quality for them which makes it superior compared to new materials.

FIGURE 8: Little self-made house adjacent to the shore (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

This way of thinking highlights how an aesthetic theory can direct the inhabitants' behavior in construction practices, in the choice of material and their design, thus involving the whole way of life chosen by the inhabitants.

The contrast between the rest of the city, representing a certain system of value, and the inhabitants of Fredens Havn arises precisely because of an incompatibility that concerns a difference, a distance between visions of life and living.

Being aware of an aesthetic model creates the possibility of debate and justifies the request for recognition. The simple aesthetic model, dictated by reuse and harmony with the surrounding

environment, is in stark contrast with the strict canons of the city and the mathematical subdivision of the buildings in the Holmen district. For the inhabitants of Fredens Havn, non-harmony with the environment is a negative factor that leads to a depersonalization of the individual from his habitat and imposes a precise and non-chosen housing model. A recurrent generalization in the stories of the inhabitants that I read in terms of an emic representation and a leading element of the self-representation practices of the inhabitants of Fredens Havn used to mark a difference with the rest of the city, to create an 'Us' that is opposed to an 'Other'.

The relationship established between these points of view also concerns a problem related to representation. Both the inhabitants of Fredens Havn and the actors involved in drafting the report have built a "simulacrum of the other" (Greimas 1979).

For the inhabitants of Fredens Havn the people who live in the city center are an 'Other' subdued to a model of life, aesthetically and socially shared, which is imposed on them. Contact with the environment and living on water, on the other hand, become markers of a different 'Us'. This element is of particular interest to best explain that relationship between space and identity: the built space becomes the tool on which to set one's identity in contrast with the rest of the city and, through this, be able to represent oneself, communicate and affirm this identity to the city.

To understand these issues, the example that I am going to mention concerns the track of one of the piers that make up the community, Esben's place, from its construction to its inclusion in the official Christiania map of 2016. Most of the information and dialogues that I will report are the result of a series of workshops held at the CRIR headquarters (Christiania Researcher in Residence)[11], in which I was hosted from October to December 2016.

I arranged the workshops myself together with some members of the community to organize some public events in the light of an eviction notice. During these meetings we discussed the community space, the neighborhood residents' perception of the space and the often strong reactions of the institutions after the 2013 Dossier.

The history of Esben's place is a very significant case to reflect on the notion of spatialization explained earlier. It may be noted that in the stories of the inhabitants space takes on a cultural meaning (Basso 1990), and the management and organization of spatial resources are treated as communicative actions to assert its own identity and autonomy within the urban space.

FIGURE 9: Donley Island (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

[11] The CRIR (Christiania Researcher in Residence) is an institution within the Freetown of Christiania which provides rooms to host researchers, artists or scholars who intend to undertake themed research paths in or on the Christiania community. see www.crir.net.

Floating actions: from the construction of the platform to the map of Christiania
Esben's Place is one of the first piers formed in the space occupied by Fredens Havn. The construction of this pier included two phases: a first phase of construction of the platform connected to the shore which takes the name of Else and a second phase of construction of the *Krydset* (Cross). The latter, as well as being used as a pier, also facilitates the collection of waste and safeguards the boats and the shore from the waves created by the passage of boats. The cross was built at the exact point where the channel winds cross.
This pier is very particular and significant for the community since it led to the first housing settlement in the Fredens Havn space. The event is remembered like this:

> When I got here there was only trash. When I saw all this garbage I thought there could be something useful, that I could build something out of that material. I started cleaning the shore with the help of some friends who also lived near Refshalevej. When we found the boards, we immediately thought of building a boardwalk that would help us tie the boats here. The idea of the cross came to me later, when I noticed that the winds and the passing boats created waves that did not allow the platform to stand still, with the risk of destroying everything. The cross determined the beginning of everything, I think. It marks the center of the community.
>
> (Conversation with E. of 03/10/2016)

The cross has a crucial role in the development of the community both from a spatial and social point of view. The construction of the pier space also had a political role. During the same conversation, different versions of the case emerged, but in all of them the 'tactical' (de Certeau 1984) role that the construction of the cross had in being recognized as an autonomous reality was underlined:

> E.: After building the cross, nobody understood what was going on in this area. Everyone thought it had to do with Christiania, but it didn't. The police came every day and told us that we had to remove everything, but we continued. We asked a lawyer for advice and he studied the case. He told us that we should form an association, and that we were doing something extraordinary, without knowing it. That that space was a gray zone, which they could not clear. So we, after an assembly, decided to make that group (settlement) Fredens Havn
>
> (Conversation with E. of 13/10/2016)

> S.: The cross? The cross gave us a voice. It was the first experiment that created this reality. Nobody lived here before. It was not possible. Only E. lived on the shore, but not on a boat.
>
> (Conversation with S. of 13/10/2016)

> R.: The cross is used to collect garbage and to defend the (bird) nests from the waves. We only did what we had to do to make this place what it is today. We cleaned it and we respect it. The police want to send us away, but this is our home. If they take the cross away, only rubbish remains here. But the council understood that the cross is necessary, they are on our side. The Fredens Havn project has been accepted.
>
> (Conversation with R. of 13/10/2016)

Following a tradition of studies that deals with the problem of spatiality and built environment (Rappaport 1982; Bourdier and AlSayyad 1989; Holston 1991; Kalufus 2012;), we can say that the construction of Else and the Cross were the first spatial organization actions that semantised the place in a particular way. The construction activities started the identity process of a place, taking up a concept by Signorelli, one could think of a practice of modeling space as a gesture aimed at establishing a cultural identity. The space becomes a system of values that is communicated to the city thanks to the characteristics of the landscape and the rewriting of the territory.
Furthermore, this action takes on an important political value. To say that "*the Cross marks the center of the community*" means overturning a social positioning that sees these groups as marginal compared to the rest of the city. On the shore, at the cross, there is the place where meetings and public gatherings take place.
A tactical action (de Certeau 1984) useful to "acquire a presence that settles the overcoming of the dramatic socio-economic inequalities with the modification of the forms of politics" (Malighetti 2012:

873). An action aimed at *taking up space* within excluding and stigmatizing policies.

The desire to be recognized by the city as a housing reality led the inhabitants to want to insert Fredens havn in the official map of Christiania, this happened in 2016. The president of the Fredens Havn association found this step very important:

> if you are on a map it means that you exist, that you are recognized. Once you are written on a map it means that your presence is real, that you are there. It is a way to claim our identity and fix it forever. Frendes havn is real. If it is on a map it cannot be deleted.
>
> (Conversation with E. of 07/05/2017).

FIGURE 10: Meetings square (Photo by Giuseppe Mazzarino)

The official presence of Fredens Havn within a Freetown map has given visibility and recognition to the place, indicating its precise location and geographical coordinates. At the same time, however, it has produced a series of reconsiderations by some members of the community who believe that in this way Fredens Havn is identified as part of Freetown, while in reality it was born precisely in opposition and in contrast with the policies that have made Christiania a "Tivoli for junkies"[12].

For others, however, the presence of Fredens Havn on the official map is a sign that the community exists and that the project can go on. In this regard, I report a brief dialogue that took place during a meeting dated 30 March 2017, many months after the meetings held for the realization of the map:

> B.: The territory of Christiania ends there, after the road, and we are not part of Christiania. They don't want our project, they just want to take over the gray zone to expand and do business with tourists here, too, on the canal. This is all Christiania is now and we are not like that. They are convinced that they are free and that they live in their territory as free men and instead they are slaves of the system and we are not part of the system. We can really live as we want, build our houses without taking into account the system, the council, the taxes and the urban plan. This way we risk being "normalized" too.
>
> E.: Being in the gray zone allows us not to be associated with Christiania. Our presence there indicates that our space is Ours. And that we, all of us, are something, a reality that now exists, because if you are on a map everyone can see that you are there. Christiania's help is essential for

[12] This derogatory expression refers to the fact that Christiania's space management policies have transformed the community into a tourist attraction – hence the reference to Tivoli, a well known amusement park in the city of Copenhagen – for people interested in the use of soft drugs. The sale of soft drugs is, in fact, one of the peculiar characteristics of the Freetown space.

us. How do we manage waste without Christiania? Where do we get water? We are not part of Christiania but we owe it a lot. We can do what they can no longer do.

B.: If they decide to make Fredens Havn a new area of Christiania, I'll weigh anchor and move my house from here.

The conflict arises from the fear of losing one's domestic space and one's freedom. Independence from the system and self-determination are recognized values that are protected at all costs. The making of the map was an important step for the community, which felt publicly recognized. Marking space as one's 'own' is a new form of right which many, paraphrasing Lefebvre, might call "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1967), but which I would prefer to call right *to take up space* in the city.

The map was one of the elements that made Frendens havn an autonomous and spatially positioned reality. Thanks to the ability of the inhabitants in managing the space available to them, and to the recognition of the project by the council, Fredens Havn continues to carry out its activities.

ILLUSTRATION 1: Christiania's map with Fredens Havn

Conclusions

In the text *From text to action,* Paul Ricœur says says: "[…] if all discourse is realized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning. What we wish to understand is not the fleeting event but rather the meaning that endures" (Paul Ricœur 1991: 78). This sentence traces a common thread in this short and descriptive contribution, in which the attempt is to talk about space in a very particular sense. It is Ricœur himself who tells us that discourse is an event in at least three meanings, the first of which consists in maintaining that "when someone speaks something happens", the second that the event, and therefore the discourse, is always temporally located and the third meaning consists in believing that speech is an event insofar as it "refers to a world it presumes to describe, express or represent" (Ricœur 1991: 78).

In this contribution, through a particular use of the term 'spatialization', I have tried to emphasize the extraordinary ability that people have to convey meanings through the social organization of space (Rodman 1992; Low 2000, 2003; Lawrence 2003). Space, in this case, becomes a particular language. A language with at least three main and fundamental characteristics: it is a language placed within a precise context (temporal and spatial), a language through which it is possible to describe a particular political, social and identity condition, and, lastly, a language through which it is possible to express a condition and establish a relationship with other actors. This idea creates many analogies between the space thus understood and the event/discourse that Ricœur mentions in his work. Furthermore, it leads

us to think of space as a complex semiotic system in which the units involved are narrative and not linguistic (Hammad, 2006).

The ethnographic case presented showed us that both in the daily practice of 'living a space', as for example it was for the construction of the platform, and in the representations of space, graphic or verbal, reported by the inhabitants of Fredens Havn, the space acquires an indispensable role in the group's political affirmation process in the city.

The space communicates the values and intentions of the group to the city and at the same time facilitates the process of recognizing the project and its usefulness in the area.

As was mentioned in the introduction, urban policies today give little importance to disadvantaged classes, and create increasingly sophisticated systems of repression and exclusion of these from the city's territory. Exercising this power encourages the search of new forms of action to try to *take up space* in the grip of neoliberal policies.

Taking up space also means reclaiming that idea of 'locality' (Appadurai 2014) that is being lost due to the transformation of our cities. Urban policies, increasingly convinced of extending urban boundaries towards the metropolitan, have given rise to a now widespread phenomenon of depersonalization of local identities and loss of cultural peculiarities, following the logic of globalization. In accordance with what Appadurai suggests, in informal realities we can find interesting examples of re-appropriation of the rights to the city and space, implemented daily through the exercise of practices and actions to improve the living conditions of poor or marginalized groups (Appadurai 2014).

Fredens Havn is a particular example of how daily space management actions can be the starting point for the construction of new forms of citizenship. This type of reality allows us to rewrite the power relations and undermine some key concepts that govern the idea of the city today and that are pivotal to contemporary urban policies. Fundamental categories in use in the debate on the city, such as private/public, exclusion/inclusion, center/periphery are completely re-articulated on the basis of new ways of organizing the spatial resources available. Using Giorgio Agamben's words we can say that realities like Fredens Havn live in a 'state of exception' that transforms these places into real "laboratories of new forms of subjectivity" (Malighetti 2011). The place of exception thanks to which it is possible to recognize oneself through a comparison with the Other and create new forms of right to the city and to living. A spontaneous way of reacting to policies of exclusion that lead actors to "be outside and yet belong" (Agamben 2003) to the city. An action that involves using the right to live the space as sole purpose.

REFERENCES

AA.VV.
2011   *Space for Urban Alternatives? Christiania 1971-2011*. Möklinta: Gidlunds Förlag,

AMOUROUX, Christa
2009   Normalizing Christiania: Project Clean Sweep and the Normalization Plan in Copenhagen. *City & Society* 21(1): 108-132.

APPADURAI, Arjun
1988   Introduction: Place and voice in anthropological theory. *Cultural Anthropology* 3(1): 16-20.
1996   *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
2013   *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso.

Basso, Keith Hamilton
1990   *Western Apache language and culture*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Bourdier, Jean Paul – Alsayyad, Nezar
1989   *Dwellings, settlements, and tradition: cross-cultural perspectives*. Lanham: University Press of America.

Coppola, Alessandro, Vanolo, Alberto
2015   Normalising autonomous space: Ongoing transformations in Christiania, Copenhagen. *Urban Studies* 52(6): 1152-1168.

de Certeau, Michel
1984   [1980] *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Duranti, Alessandro
2002   *Culture e discorso. Un lessico per le scienze umane*. Roma: Meltemi.

Duranti, Alessandro – Goodwin, Charles (eds)
1992   *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, Anthony
1992   *Central Problems in Social Theory: Actions, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien – Courtés, Joshep
1979   *Sémiotique: dictionnaire raisonné de la theorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette.

Hammad, Manar
2006   *Livre l'espace, Comprendre l'architecture. Essays sèmiotique*. Limoges: Pulim.

Harvey, David
2005   *A Brief Story of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Holston, James
1991   Autoconstruction in working-class Brazil. *Cultural Anthropology* 6: 447-465.

Ingold, Tim
2013   *Making. Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, London: Routledge.

Lefebvre, Henri
1967   Le droit à la ville. *L' Homme et la société* 6: 29-35.

Low, Setha
1996   Spatializing Culture: The social production and social construction of public space. *American Ethnologist* 23(4): 861-879.
2000   *On the plaza: the politics of public space and culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

2009   Toward an Anthropological Theory of Space and Place, Special Issue on Signification and Space. *Semiotica* 175(1-4): 21–37.

Low, Setha, Lawrence-Zuniga, Denise
2008   *The anthropology of space and place: Localiting culture*. Malden: Blackwell.

Nielsen, Asbjørn
2020   Christiania: A free city in the city of Copenhagen, in C. Milstein (ed), *Deciding for Ourselves: The promise of Direct Democracy*. Chico: AK Press. Pp.137-160.

Nonini, Donald Macon (ed)
2014   *Companion* to *Urban Anthropology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

MALIGHETTI, Roberto
2011   Biopolitiche di eccezione e pratiche di resistenza. *Confluenze* 3 (2): 22-34.
2012   Eccedere l'eccezione. Pratiche di cambiamento e forme di cittadinanza. *Atti del 34° Convegno Internazionale di Americanistica.* Pp. 873-882.

RICŒUR, Paul
1991   *From Text to action. Essays in Hermeneutic II.* Evanston: Nortwestern University Press.

RODMAN, Margaret
1985   Moving houses: Residential mobility of residents in Longana, Vanatu. *American Anthropologist* 87:56-72.
1992   Empowering place: Multilocality and multivocality. *American Anthropologist* 94(3): 640-656.

SIGNORELLI, Amalia
1999   *Antropologia Urbana. Introduzione alla ricerca in Italia*, Milano: Guerini studio.

STEIGER, Tina
2018   Cycles of the Copenhagen squatter movement: From Slumstormer to BZ Brigades and the Autonomous Movement, in M. Martinez Lopez (ed), *The Urban Politics of the Squatters' movement*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp.165-208.

THÖRN, Håkan
2012   In between social engineering and gentrification*:* Urban restructuring, social movements, and the place politics of open space. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34(2): 153–168.

Objets, corps et trajectoires de sens.
Représentation de la spatialité claustrale

Francesca Sbardella, *University of Bologna*

ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss some cases of situational spaces where issues of relational meaning between objects that are loaded with sacred significance and the spatiality in which they are located arise. The relational issues occur on account of concrete or symbolic proximity/distance and/or juxtaposition. Such relationality is construed by the social actors based on monastic norms, which stabilize space and act on the object itself, albeit indirectly, modifying it. The analysis takes into account two main indicators, i.e. the author's personal participatory experience in a French Carmelite monastery on the one hand, and some of the pictures made by photographer Franco Zecchin of those spaces I myself experienced on the other. The photographic representation clarifies how spatiality itself generates the order of the place, through visual correspondence, outlining trajectories of meaning and the objects' status.

BIO

Francesca Sbardella (1971) is Full Professor of Historical and Religious Studies and Demo-ethno-anthropological Studies at the University of Bologna (Italy), where she lectures on the History of Religions, Anthropology of Religious Systems and Patrimony, and Methodologies of the study of Religions. Her main research interest is in the history and anthropology of religions within Europe, with a particular focus on the Catholic context. She obtained the Diplôme d'Études Approfondies (DEA) in Anthropologie sociale et histoire de l'Europe at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), and a joint PhD in Religious Studies (social sciences and historical studies of religions) from the University of Bologna and EHESS. Together with M. Turci, she is head of the Permanent laboratory on ethnography of material culture (LAECM) for the Specialization program in Demo-ethno-anthropological studies and is member of the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie et d'Histoire de l'Institution de la Culture, Paris (LAHIC). Among her publications are: Abitare il silenzio. Un'antropologa in clausura (Viella, Roma 2015); Scrivere del 'sacro'. Testi inediti episcopali e monastici (Bretagna XIX-XX secolo) (Clueb, Bologna 2012); Antropologia delle reliquie. Un caso storico (Morcelliana, Brescia 2007). She edited Antropologia dell'Europa. I testi della riflessione francese (Pàtron, Bologna 2007); with C. Gianotto, Tra pratiche e credenze. Traiettorie antropologiche e storiche. Un omaggio ad Adriana Destro (Morcelliana, Brescia 2017); with M.C. Giorda, Famiglia monastica. Prassi aggregative di isolamento (Pàtron, Bologna 2012); and with F. Lai, Esperienze etnografiche al femminile. Complicità, osservazione e racconto (Pàtron, Bologna 2011).

francesca.sbardella@unibo.it

Introduction

> Nous pouvons tous rencontrer des *dieux objets* (des autres, bien sûr),
> avec des cultes étranges et construits à l'image et à la ressemblance de leurs fidèles
> (Nicola Gasbarro, Postface à la traduction italienne de *Le dieu objet*, de Marc Augé)

Dans la clôture, la disposition des objets et leur utilisation sont liées à des cadres perceptuels mystico-religieux et parviennent à dessiner la carte interprétative de la croyance. Je me réfère, en particulier, à deux domaines objectuels : d'une part, le domaine religieux-dévotionnel inséré dans le cadre théorique et dévotionnel traditionnel, inscrit dans le cadre interprétatif fourni par la tradition religieuse d'appartenance ; de l'autre, le domaine plus fluide et non structuré relevant de la subjectivité du croyant et ses chemins intimes personnels, qui souvent résulte de mélanges aléatoires et fondamentalement relationnels. Si l'on ne se penche guère sur ces deux cadres en termes de vie quotidienne et de tradition familiale, ils sont toutefois utiles pour appréhender des pratiques de croyance généralement cachées aux yeux du chercheur.

Différents éléments entrent en jeu dans le processus de construction des configurations de vie communautaire en clôture : l'acquisition de techniques de silence verbales et corporelles, mais aussi (élément à ne pas sous-estimer) les qualités des formes spatiales et, par conséquent, leur conception, matérielle et symbolique. D'après les perspectives proposées par Simmel et De Freedberg, les formes spatiales sont un produit de l'activité humaine et un outil de construction, mais, dans le même temps, elles agissent elles-mêmes sur les actions sociales, sur les comportements et même sur les objets (Simmel 1983 ; Freedberg 1989). Elles construisent l'individu et ses objets autant que l'individu les construit. En ce sens, la clôture, en tant que forme fermée et autoréférentielle de lieu de vie, représente un cas limite caractérisant et explicatif. Dans cet article, mon intention est de montrer que les formes spatiales permettent et structurent, d'une manière plus contraignante qu'ailleurs, la vie quotidienne des religieuses et surtout la finalité spirituelle qu'elles perçoivent au sein du cadre interprétatif de vie qu'elles se sont donné.

Cette réflexion est née dans le cadre d'un projet, plus vaste, de recherche sur la vie quotidienne des religieuses, organisé sur la base d'une ethnographie participative, en tant qu'actrice sociale protagoniste, dans deux monastères français de carmélites déchaussées[1] ; ce que je me proposais alors était d'appréhender personnellement la pratique de la vie claustrale concrète (Sbardella 2015 : 10). Le fait d'avoir été admise, pour des motifs de recherche, à la vie claustrale a signifié pour moi pouvoir y entrer *comme si* j'étais une postulante. Comme l'explique le droit canon, la postulante est une personne qui, après avoir manifesté le désir d'entrer dans un ordre religieux, passe une période de probation appelée, précisément, postulat[2]. À ce stade, avant de décider d'entreprendre ou non le parcours du noviciat, la personne a la possibilité de s'engager dans quelques courtes expériences de vie (d'une durée d'un mois ou deux) au couvent. Cela m'a permis, pendant mon séjour, de prendre à mon compte les droits et devoirs revenant généralement à une postulante et de suivre une partie du chemin d'apprentissage par lequel une femme approche l'environnement claustral et, en intervenant sur elle-même, se construit en tant que moniale.

À la fin de mon travail sur le terrain, alors que l'écriture en était déjà à un stade avancé, le photographe Franco Zecchin, célèbre pour ses clichés sur la mafia,[3] a relevé le défi d'entrer pendant

---

[1] Pour pouvoir relater mon expérience, il m'a fallu, compte tenu de la délicatesse de certaines des questions abordées et de mon intrusion dans des situations personnelles, garantir l'anonymat aux deux Carmels qui m'ont accueillie et aux différentes religieuses que j'ai rencontrées.

[2] Code de droit canonique (CIC) 1917, can. 539-541 *; Règle et constitutions des Moniales déchaussées de l'Ordre de la bienheureuse Vierge Marie du Mont-Carmel adaptées selon les directives du Concile Vatican II et les normes canoniques en vigueur approuvées par le Siège Apostolique en l'an 1991*, Ordre des Pères Carmélites déchaussés, Rome 1991, 141. Il est intéressant de noter que, si les *Constitutions* carmélites et l'ancien Code de droit canonique parlent du postulat comme d'une période de pré-noviciat, cette période n'est pas prise en considération dans le Code de droit canonique (CIC) de 1983, qui mentionne exclusivement le noviciat (can. 641-653). Les exigences fixées pour le postulat par le Code de droit canonique de 1917 et par les *Constitutions* figurent dans le Code de 1983 au titre d'exigences liées à l'accès au noviciat. Pour une définition postulante/postulat, voir Jombart 1967.

[3] Né en 1953 à Milan, Franco Zecchin s'établit en 1975 à Palerme, où il devient photographe professionnel, travaillant sur la mafia, la corruption politique et les conditions sociales en Sicile. En 1977, avec Letizia Battaglia, il crée un Centre culturel pour

---

quelques heures (le temps accordé par les religieuses) dans l'un des deux monastères et a essayé de fixer quelques images des espaces monastiques que j'ai habités et longtemps fréquentés. Mettant en lumière certaines trajectoires de sens dans les parcours empruntés par les moniales, l'image photographique a permis de relire les espaces vides, essentiels, fixes et d'élaborer des observations sur la nature caractérisante de cette spatialité et sur les objets qui y sont placés. Je souhaite mettre en évidence le rôle visuel et symbolique que les objets acquièrent dans ces espaces et la perception que ceux-ci font naître au niveau psychologique et spirituel.

Délimitations spatiales

La spatialité claustrale, telle qu'elle se présente dans la pratique monastique carmélite, semble se caractériser par quelques éléments récurrents que les religieuses s'efforcent constamment de construire et de maintenir : délimitation, exclusivité et fixité. Ces trois éléments, qui sont, comme nous le verrons, appliqués à la fois à la macro- et micro-spatialité, garantissent la condition d'absence de parole et d'absence de mouvement.

Il est aisé de comprendre que le premier de ces éléments, à savoir la délimitation spatiale, est pour un monastère un élément constitutif et caractérisant. Être à l'intérieur et ne pas pouvoir sortir est en fait un mode de vie concret. La séparation entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, marquée par les murs du monastère et par l'interdiction de les franchir, agit avant tout sur le plan symbolique. Elle permet aux religieuses de représenter leur environnement de vie comme une unité délimitée et surtout de *se* représenter comme une réalité unitaire, cohésive et séparée du reste du social. La limite crée un cadre interprétatif et fonctionnel du groupe, qui est soumis à ses propres règles et qui, de la sorte, existe, se rend visible et se protège (Curcio 1997 : 33). C'est dans cette frontière, qui à la fois encadre et justifie, que l'unité de l'action mutuelle, la cohérence interne et les relations fonctionnelles des différents éléments acquièrent leur expression spatiale. Il convient de souligner que cette limite implique une action réciproque entre les religieuses. Le contenu sémantique de leur action est la détermination – et l'accord mutuel – à ne pas vouloir ou pouvoir agir au-delà de la frontière fixée et à structurer leur vie quotidienne à l'intérieur des murs. Le cadre agit comme un goulet qui canalise vers l'intérieur les énergies et les intentionnalités des religieuses. Cela comporte un retour important en termes de différenciation. La frontière monastique, qui rappelle aux religieuses le sens de leur choix (d'isolement et de silence), marque leur séparation du monde habité, de la vie urbaine ou agricole, des personnes qui travaillent, se déplacent, parlent – et, par conséquent, leur séparation du bruit.

Chaque fois que j'entrais dans la clôture, il s'agissait, pour moi, d'un passage à la fois physique et symbolique. Peut-être seulement par habitude, ou souhaitant me faire vivre ce moment comme l'aurait vécu une postulante, les religieuses ont toujours réalisé un mode d'accès ritualisé. Je suis passée par la porte officielle en bois qui marque l'entrée dans la clôture proprement dite et que l'on n'ouvre que lorsqu'une postulante décide d'entrer dans ce monde pour en faire partie ou en sort pour y renoncer. Si, en termes architecturaux, les bâtiments monastiques disposent de différents accès, par lesquels s'effectuent tous les passages réglementés de la vie quotidienne (pour se rendre chez le médecin ou dans les familles d'origine, pour retirer les courses), une seule porte, généralement imposante et aménagée à l'intérieur même du couvent, qui ne peut être ouverte que par la prieure, autorise l'accès *religieux*.

L'image de la porte d'entrée, si chère aux Carmélites, est en fait tirée du texte des *Constitutions* *« primitives »* : une étape que, bien qu'elle ne figure plus dans les *Constitutions* de 1991, les religieuses continuent de citer et de prendre comme référence de comportement.

---

la photographie et, en 1980, il est l'un des fondateurs du Centre de documentation contre la mafia « G. Impastato ». Il fait du théâtre et réalise des films à l'hôpital psychiatrique de Palerme. Depuis 1987, il est directeur responsable de la revue mensuelle de culture et de politique *Grandevù*, publiée à Palerme. En 1988, il devient membre *nominé* de l'agence Magnum. En 1991, il commence une recherche photographique sur le nomadisme et l'utilisation des ressources environnementales, travaillant pendant quelques années sur une dizaine de sociétés dans différentes parties du monde. Aujourd'hui, il vit et travaille à Marseille, où il continue d'explorer, à travers la photographie, la relation entre l'appropriation du territoire et les pratiques sociales. Ses photos figurent dans les collections de l'International Museum of Photography de Rochester, du MOMA de New York et de la Maison européenne de la Photographie de Paris.

La Prieure doit avoir la clef de la Grille et celle de la Porte. Quand le Médecin ou Barbier entreront, ou les autres 107* personnes nécessaires, ou bien le Confesseur, il faut toujours mener deux Compagnes.[4]

La porte est donc un seuil qui relie un « dedans » et un « dehors », mais qui rattache aussi, symboliquement, une dimension à l'autre (Coppo et Girelli 2012 : 19; Zarri 2000 : 24). Il convient de rappeler, en reprenant le schéma wébérien classique, que nous avons à faire à une « relation fermée », à un rapport de groupe dans le cadre duquel « son contenu de signification et les ordonnances qui s'y appliquent » excluent ou limitent, sous certaines conditions, une participation élargie. De tout évidence, la fermeture et la monopolisation du patrimoine (matériel et symbolique) sont censées mener à une amélioration de la mesure, de l'espèce, de la sécurité ou de la valeur de ses possibilités (Weber 1922). D'où, aussi, la difficulté d'accès, qui est elle-même une garantie d'existence du groupe.

La délimitation évidente entre le dedans et le dehors se reflète également à l'intérieur du monastère : alors que tous les accès à des locaux considérés comme importants pour la vie communautaire sont soulignés et fortement caractérisés, les lieux de passage tendent, eux, par contraste, vers une non-caractérisation. Cette séparation architecturale s'accompagne de références symboliques fortes, qui soulignent les limites des pièces et, dans le même temps, dessinent des trajectoires visuelles, de telle sorte que, si l'on regarde un objet, on en trouve aussi un autre ou on le voit au loin. Ainsi en est-il, par exemple, du crucifix situé sur le bénitier à l'entrée du réfectoire, qui renvoie, lorsque la porte s'ouvre, à celui accroché sur le mur interne (photo 1) ; de même, la porte ouverte de la cellule montre au loin un crucifix placé dans l'angle des murs (photo 2) ; et la porte-fenêtre donnant sur le cloître interne laisse entrevoir le grand crucifix au niveau de la cloche externe (photo 3).

Grâce au travail de Franco Zecchin, j'ai pu remarquer, à travers la représentation photographique des espaces, que, dans le cadre relationnel du silence, l'ordre dans lequel sont placés les objets religieux-dévotionnels répond souvent à une recherche de correspondance visuelle – un aspect auquel je n'avais guère prêté attention lorsque j'avais vécu dans ces mêmes espaces, pendant ma recherche sur le terrain. Ainsi arrive-t-il souvent que les religieuses placent certains objets en correspondance visuelle avec d'autres objets symboliques : par exemple, dans le chœur, la clochette liturgique à quatre sons est en ligne avec l'image, sur le mur, de la Vierge Marie (photo 4) et, dans la salle de récréation, les statues sont en correspondance avec les images. Ces dernières correspondances tendent à créer une délimitation interne, rappelant aux personnes qui y pénètrent la forte caractérisation religieuse de cette pièce, délimitée, précisément, par des trajectoires de sens d'empreinte religieuse et intimiste.

Les lieux de transition (couloirs, escaliers, entrées, avant-chœur) sont entièrement nus : il n'y a d'éléments ni fonctionnels, tels que des armoires ou des meubles, ni décoratifs, tels que des tableaux ou des images, sinon d'inspiration dévotionnelle et faisant partie intégrante de la structure architecturale (photo 5 et 6). Même les lieux de réunion, tels que les salles de récréation et de travail, ne contiennent que très peu de meubles (une table, un buffet ou une petite bibliothèque, quelques chaises), que l'on range généralement près du mur en fin de journée, sans beaucoup veiller à l'aspect esthétique ou décoratif, et, parfois, un tableau religieux ou une statue.

Concernant le deuxième élément, à savoir l'exclusivité, il m'est apparu que chaque pièce du monastère est perçue, décrite et, ce qui nous intéresse le plus ici, vécue par les religieuses comme un lieu exclusif, au sens de lieu unique, marqué par une fréquentation restreinte. Lieu exclusif en tant que doté d'une représentativité et d'une fonctionnalité spécifiques, chaque pièce étant concrètement destinée à une seule activité, spirituelle ou matérielle ; fréquentation restreinte, car réservée aux religieuses auxquelles la prieure a assigné cette activité spécifique ou, si l'accès en est libre, fréquentation limitée, en termes temporels, par des horaires précis qu'il faut respecter. Une activité ne peut pas être faite n'importe où et par qui que ce soit. Les religieuses tendent à créer une correspondance unique entre la spatialité, la fonctionnalité et les personnes. Cette démarche, qui évite que plusieurs personnes effectuant des tâches différentes se retrouvent dans la même pièce, permet donc de réguler à la fois le bruit et la relationnalité.

L'exclusivité construit et régit les relations avec autrui et l'affectivité. Le mouvement produit des rencontres, les rencontres dans des lieux spécifiques produisent des relations, les relations, du fait même

---

[4] *Constitutions « primitives » et Constitutions d'Alcalà de 1581*. Annexe du document, Ordre des Pères Carmélites Déchaussés, Rome 1991, 15.

qu'elles existent, menacent la solitude et le silence. La distance physique et les déplacements rapides maintiennent, quant à eux, une distance émotionnelle ; ils limitent les effusions, les gestes, les mots. Dans la règle carmélitainee, aucune religieuse ne peut entrer librement dans la cellule d'une autre moniale : cela évite, a priori, des moments de détente, de demande d'aide, de collaboration, mais aussi d'intimité confessionnelle, de proximité physique et émotionnelle. Les relations sont nivelées et la possibilité d'approfondir la connaissance d'une autre personne est limitée. Aujourd'hui encore, les religieuses parlent souvent de la nécessité d'éviter les « amitiés particulières », expression très appréciée, tirée des *Constitutions « primitives »*.

La succession des différents moments de prière quotidienne et la division des tâches de travail au sein de la communauté se reflètent directement dans la spatialité, qui est modulée par des références explicites de sens : positionnement d'objets caractérisants, aussi bien liturgico-dévotionnels que quotidiens, ou création de vides. Les objets sont disposés selon un ordre fonctionnel et représentatif, qui permet la visibilité du modèle interprétatif. De la sorte, les silences, comme d'autres situations et activités, sont eux aussi canalisés vers des environnements prédéterminés et des temps légitimés. À la base de cette structuration se trouve une pensée d'exclusivité religieuse qui régit toutes les activités de la journée : pour les moniales, chaque geste ou action (qu'il s'agisse de réciter un psaume ou de passer l'aspirateur) est en même temps donné *par* et donné *à* la divinité ; d'où son caractère exclusif, unique, irrépétible, et l'exigence d'effectuer ce geste ou cette action dans l'espace approprié et avec la plus grande attention. Le quotidien monastique recèle donc une exclusivité de pensée, une exclusivité adressée à la divinité. Voilà qui explique que celle-ci, tout comme ses intermédiaires (saints, madones, anges), soit l'objet de références constantes, y compris dans des endroits qui ne sont pas directement liés aux activités liturgico-dévotionnelles, comme l'atelier de production des hosties (photo 7 et 8) ou la bibliothèque de la salle de récréation (photo 9). Il suffit que l'on entre dans la pièce ou que l'on utilise un objet particulier d'usage quotidien, ou simplement que l'on s'en approche, et le regard est forcément orienté aussi vers un rappel à la dévotion.

La troisième qualité de l'espace claustral qui influe sur les actions des uns et des autres est la « fixité ». C'est là la première particularité de la communauté claustrale : elle est fixée sur le lieu de son activité et ne peut s'en éloigner. Cet élément influence la structure dans son ensemble. Les religieuses perçoivent le lieu comme un centre, de sorte que l'union entre les différents éléments du groupe ne peut se faire que là où le groupe vit et agit, et c'est à l'intérieur de ce cadre que le groupe acquiert un sens et se nourrit. La moniale elle-même n'est une carmélite que dans la spatialité claustrale et la condition du silence n'a sa dimension caractérisante qu'à l'intérieur des murs. De plus, tout comme les femmes, les éléments de la communauté (objets, articles d'ameublement) sont limités à des espaces spécifiques, stables, immobiles. Les religieuses tendent à leur conserver les mêmes positions, les mêmes fonctionnalités. Il convient de noter que la fixité est aussi, dans ce cas, fixation, à savoir un acte par lequel on fixe ou l'on stabilise quelque chose. La fixité doit être reconnue non seulement comme une condition, mais aussi comme une pratique agie dans la vie quotidienne. Il y a là une stratégie opérationnelle précise. Un aspect significatif à cet égard est l'habitude de laisser les objets bien en ordre, non pas de les ranger, au sens général du terme, mais de les ranger *toujours au même endroit*, avec une attention presque obsessionnelle. La réticence à changer et la répétitivité du modèle comportemental quotidien conduisent à avoir autour de soi un environnement fixe, immobilisé, toujours égal à lui-même. Naturellement, cette fixité acquiert plus d'importance encore si on la compare au dynamisme du monde extérieur : à la fin du repas, au réfectoire, les objets sont toujours replacés de la même façon sur les tables, avec minutie et attention (photo 10) ; il en est de même pour les objets qui se trouvent dans la salle de récréation (photo 11)

Le positionnement des bibelots artistiques et ornementaux (généralement de petites figurines dévotionnelles) est lui aussi contrôlé. Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard, ni une simple question d'esthétique si les objets du cloître sont toujours posés sur des napperons brodés ou sur des nappes : le tissu amortit le bruit lorsque l'on doit les déplacer, il permet des sons étouffés et, dans le même temps, contribue à accroître la perception d'un emplacement fixe, « centré ». La micro-spatialité semble donc elle aussi affectée par la question du son, qui est ainsi maîtrisé.

La délimitation, l'exclusivité et la fixité produisent généralement une spatialité tendant vers le vide, fluide, sans entrave pour le mouvement. Les pièces semblent grandes et vides, non pas tant en raison de leurs dimensions réelles, mais par effet de ce mobilier essentiel dont nous avons parlé : aucun objet n'est ici susceptible de créer des situations relationnelles porteuses de bruit. N'oublions pas que, dans un

environnement presque vide, les sons s'amplifient, se réfléchissent davantage, de telle sorte que même un petit bruit devient perceptible et que le chevauchement de plusieurs sons peut se révéler fastidieux.

L'espace monastique est souvent, dans les différentes parties qui le composent, identique à lui-même et, à première vue, répétitif. Abstraction faite des aspects de nature strictement religieuse, il n'y a pas, dans la spatialité monastique, de distinction nette entre le chœur, où se déroulent en présence de toute la communauté les activités liturgico-dévotionnelles (messe, prière, méditation), et le reste du couvent, c'est-à-dire les endroits où prennent place les autres activités (repas, récréation et travail). Il y a une raison à cela : en fait, tout le monastère semble reproduire, sur le plan architectural et émotionnel, le chœur lui-même. Dans la *Règle* carmélitaine, l'expression *ora et labora* se traduit par l'idée que la prière continue et le travail relèvent d'une nécessité physiologique, au même titre que le fait de s'alimenter (Sbardella 2013). Examinons en détail les différentes situations spatiales. La spatialité du chœur n'est marquée que par les stalles, c'est-à-dire de grands sièges en bois, pour la plupart équipés d'accoudoirs et de dossiers, alignés de manière à former un complexe architectural spéculaire, de sorte que les religieuses de la communauté se trouvent face à face. Les images de la divinité sont les seuls éléments caractérisants. Nous avons affaire à une spatialité statique, qui favorise la visibilité de chaque femme dans le groupe et par conséquent le contrôle mutuel. Les autres salles du monastère, bien que présentant des spatialités différentes, reproduisent toujours les deux éléments caractéristiques du chœur : la tranquillité du lieu de culte, qui s'étend à l'ensemble de l'habitat, et la disposition frontale, presque circulaire, des personnes. Si, comme nous l'avons vu, cette spatialité est préconçue et fixe dans le réfectoire et dans la salle de récréation, dans les autres endroits les religieuses tendent, en cas de besoin, à le proposer à nouveau. Lorsque, par exemple, pour une raison contingente, elles doivent s'arrêter dans une pièce qui n'est pas aménagée pour ce genre de réunion, elles s'emploient à déplacer chaises et fauteuils pour recréer, autant que possible, la situation recherchée. Le fait que soit privilégiée la disposition frontale et/ou circulaire est clairement dicté par le choix sonore du silence, que ce genre de mise en place favorise. Les comportements ou usages mis en place dans le chœur tendent de même à être reproduits à l'extérieur. Lorsqu'elles entrent dans le réfectoire ou dans la salle de récréation, les religieuses se signent et s'inclinent devant une image (un tableau ou une statue) représentant la divinité, toujours présente dans chaque pièce.

Les qualités des spatialités examinées (et qui, pour être bien comprises, ne doivent pas être isolées des autres spatialités communes) sont considérées comme caractérisantes et les religieuses agissent continuellement sur elles par des stratégies de protection et d'accentuation. Il est clair que le discours sur la spatialité implique des choix identitaires extrêmes. Les moniales se placent dans un contexte circonscrit et autoréférentiel et, par là, exercent un contrôle actif sur les relations externes et assurent leur représentation d'elles-mêmes en tant que femmes du « dedans », qui échappent aux regards du « dehors ». Les choix liés à la spatialité doivent être lus à la lumière de deux paramètres d'interprétation : d'une part, la proximité (ou la distance) sensible qui se crée entre les personnes circulant dans la clôture et celles qui gravitent autour de celle-ci ; de l'autre, la pratique monastique elle-même, dictée par la Règle et, en même temps, par la quotidienneté. Le parcours d'apprentissage mystique et intimiste auquel les postulantes sont soumises pendant leurs débuts dans la vie communautaire passe par la connaissance de la spatialité. Bien que les *Constitutions* ne contiennent aucune référence à cet égard, les religieuses apprennent, par imitation, des stratégies de localisation d'elles-mêmes et des éléments environnants : où et comment se positionner dans les différentes activités, comment mettre les objets en place, comment disposer et orienter les différentes pièces d'ameublement. Ces attitudes proxémiques s'accompagnent d'aptitudes émotionnelles et comportementales liées à la construction de la femme religieuse. L'attention au détail, la méticulosité, l'ordre des objets, la propreté : ce sont là des comportements que toute religieuse doit avoir, car ils relèvent de la capacité d'auto-contrôle.

Silences et silencements

Une indication sonore est également liée à l'espace : le son de la cloche. Pour les religieuses, il signale, plus que les temps de prière, les lieux du monastère, qui s'assimilent à des moments liturgico-dévotionnels précis. Lorsque, pendant mon travail sur le terrain, il m'arrivait de ne pas comprendre la répartition du temps et de ne pas me rappeler à quel moment de la journée correspondaient les différents

sons de la cloche, mon *ange gardien*[5] me nommait l'endroit (cuisine, chœur, réfectoire) où devait se dérouler l'activité en question et les autres moniales m'indiquaient la direction de la main. Ce sont là deux expressions spatiales, l'une verbale, l'autre gestuelle. De la sorte, un lien se crée, non pas tant entre le son et le moment religieux, connoté par un certain type de prière, mais plutôt entre le son et l'espace, déplaçant l'interprétation d'un plan typologique et sémantique à un plan strictement spatial. Dans la représentation mentale des religieuses, le son de la cloche semble donc être lié, dans un premier temps, à une situation localisée. Le son est lu et communiqué sur base spatiale et non sur base représentationnelle ou, si l'on préfère, sur la base d'un contenu (liturgico-dévotionnel), comme l'on pourrait s'y attendre en milieu claustral. De plus, lorsque les religieuses parlent de leurs entretiens avec des personnes externes ou de leurs moments de prière, elles préfèrent s'exprimer en termes d'espace (« je vais à l'oratoire » ou « j'ai été au chœur ») plutôt que d'utiliser des termes qualitatifs tels que réunion, entretien, rendez-vous ou encore prière, oraison, vêpres. Dans ces situations, les références sonores elles-mêmes sont définies et comprises en termes spatiaux. Les expressions et expériences du vécu religieux sont orientées et définies par la construction spatiale, qui doit être reconnue, à tous les égards, comme génératrice de sens en termes de silence.

Étant établi que la sonorité est la qualité de ce qui est sonore, de ce qui donne du son, entrer dans la clôture exige que l'on en affronte immédiatement une dimension extrême, totalisante, qui affecte la personne et l'espace : le silence. Les religieuses qui vivent cette réalité ne sont généralement pas d'accord avec cette déclaration, qui pour elles ne correspond pas à ce qu'elles perçoivent ; mais, pour une personne de l'extérieur qui pénètre dans le couvent, le tout premier impact est de type acoustique. Dans la clôture carmélitaine, la vie quotidienne est ponctuée d'une séquence ordonnée de silences et de moments de prière, où seule est permise la parole de dévotion. Il se crée une structure de référence comportementale – et donc interprétative – fixe et contraignante. Le temps est organisé sur la base de la liturgie des heures, c'est-à-dire de l'ensemble de psaumes, hymnes, prières et lectures que les ecclésiastiques, les moines et les religieux des deux sexes sont tenus de réciter pendant la journée et qui sont distribués selon les heures canoniales (laude, tierce, none, vêpres, complies)[6]. C'est autour de la liturgie des heures qu'est organisé le reste de la journée, qu'il s'agisse des moments consacrés à la religion et à la dévotion (messe, récitation de *l'angélus* et oraison) ou des moments de travail et de récréation (Sbardella 2015 : 27).

Tout au long de la journée, il est interdit de parler ou de se parler les uns aux autres et toutes les activités, y compris les repas et le travail, se produisent en l'absence de voix. Aucun autre échange verbal n'est autorisé que la récitation de prières et l'intonation de chants pendant la liturgie des heures. Il n'est possible de parler librement que pendant les deux courtes récréations. Examinons quelques chiffres pour avoir une idée du temps tel qu'il est effectivement réparti. La journée claustrale est de 16 heures et 45 minutes (de 5h45 à 22h30), soit un total de 1 005 minutes. Pour l'ensemble de la journée, il y a 75 minutes de verbalisation sonore libre (divisées en deux récréations, respectivement de 30 et de 45 minutes), soit 7,6% du temps d'éveil. Toutefois, l'analyse ne doit pas seulement se pencher sur la durée du temps de silence, mais aussi sur les moments où il est possible de parler. Or, à la contrainte temporelle de 75 minutes s'ajoute le fait que la période de liberté est imposée et se limite aux récréations, sans possibilité de choix personnel. L'on en vient inévitablement à prendre en compte la nature obligatoire qui entre ici en jeu. Sur le plan psychologique, en effet, ce qui est lourd, c'est à la fois la durée prolongée pendant laquelle l'on doit s'abstenir de toute parole et le fait d'avoir à orienter celle-ci vers des temps prédéterminés. Ne pas respecter cette contrainte équivaut à un péché qu'il faut confesser, dans la mesure où il y a transgression à une norme partagée. Parvenir à contrôler l'émission du son vocal (la parole, donc) est un parcours personnel long et fatigant qui fait partie de l'apprentissage spirituel de la novice et avec lequel elle doit se mesurer tout au long de sa vie.

Le contrôle que les religieuses appliquent à leur voix porte également sur leur corps et sur leurs gestes. Les mouvements sont limités au strict minimum et sont consciemment agis. On apprend à réguler le geste et surtout à lui ôter de sa force. Lorsque l'on passe d'une pièce à l'autre, on marche doucement, sans mouvements précipités, en essayant de maintenir un niveau sonore étouffé ou amorti. Le plus petit

---

[5] L'ange gardien est une religieuse qui accompagne la postulante et la novice, les aidant, en cas de besoin, dans les activités quotidiennes et les soutenant dans leurs parcours intime.

[6] La liturgie des heures est, pour les Carmélites déchaussées, un instrument de prière pour s'unir à la « louange éternelle » due à la divinité « pour le salut du monde entier » (*Constitutions*, cit., 68).

bruit, en effet, par exemple un pas lourd ou une porte ouverte trop brusquement, produit par toutes les occupantes du couvent, provoquerait immédiatement une certaine confusion ou du moins une absence de silence. Au cours de mon expérience claustrale, je faisais toujours du bruit, troublant le calme habituel : contrairement à ce qui se passait avec les religieuses, tout le monde m'entendait quand j'ouvrais et fermais les portes, allais à la salle de bains, montais les escaliers, traversais les couloirs, entrais dans ma cellule ou en sortais, passais d'une pièce à l'autre. Bientôt, j'ai décidé de ne plus porter de chaussures, mais des pantoufles. Je me demandais comment les religieuses, qui pourtant portaient des chaussures, réussissaient à ne pas faire de bruit quand elles marchaient alors que, malgré les pantoufles, je restais reconnaissable. C'est une question de techniques corporelles et de capacité de contrôle. Étant donné que le corps est le principal moyen technique dont dispose l'individu (Mauss 1936), il est nécessaire, pour accomplir un objectif physique, de s'adapter, de se former, d'apprendre. Pour agir et prier sans bruit, il faut acquérir des techniques précises. Souvent, par distraction ou par habitude, nous ne contrôlons pas les petits mouvements que nous faisons au quotidien et nous ne remarquons pas le bruit que nous provoquons en agissant. D'une manière spéculaire, ce sont précisément ces mouvements et ces bruits qui sous-tendent et caractérisent notre espace et nous-mêmes. D'après les moniales, la vie carmélitaine est caractérisée et justifiée par le désir d'entrer en contact avec la divinité, qui est à tous égards la figure centrale de la vie elle-même et qui est perçue comme réelle. Ce contact est recherché quotidiennement au travers des pratiques du silence et de la solitude.

Il est intéressant de noter que, dans la clôture, les femmes ne se regardent pas dans la glace. Les monastères carmélitains, en particulier, ne possèdent généralement pas de miroirs, ni suspendus au mur comme décoration esthétique, ni dans les salles de bain comme objets fonctionnels aux soins du corps. Dans certaines cellules, il y a parfois une petite glace de sac à main dans le tiroir du lavabo. Le problème découle du fait que ce reflet de l'image de soi, pouvant être regardé, peut inciter à prêter attention à son corps et à l'observer. Certes, le miroir ne reflète pas toute la figure, il « découpe » le corps en parties si petites qu'il ne permet pas de le voir en entier. Mais, du point de vue des religieuses, l'observation répétée de son corps conduit inévitablement à des formes, ne serait-ce que voilées, de narcissisme. Les femmes de la clôture ne se regardent donc pas dans la glace. Se regarder, cela signifie tourner son regard vers soi-même, alors que le regard devrait être dirigé vers la divinité. Pour les religieuses, c'est là une question centrale, qu'elles utilisent souvent pour expliquer ce qu'elles sont et ce qu'elles cherchent. Apparemment anodin, le simple geste de se regarder dans une glace est en fait une façon de se percevoir et de voir que l'on est là. Il s'agit d'une attestation et d'une confirmation de présence. C'est pourquoi ce geste affecte fortement notre façon de nous représenter et, par conséquent, affecte aussi la façon dont nous nous rapportons à ceux qui nous entourent (y compris la divinité). Pour faciliter l'acceptation de la présence du dieu, l'on finit par nier la sienne propre. De toute évidence, l'on joue sur la relation absence en tant que présence.

> Francesca : Concernant le fait de se regarder dans la glace, j'ai remarqué que vous ne le faites jamais. Vous n'avez pas de miroirs autour de vous ?
> Sœur Rosette : Non, il n'y en a pas, mais d'une façon ou d'une autre nous pouvons nous regarder, bien sûr. Mais on ne se regarde pas seulement au niveau de l'image ; on se regarde aussi parler, on s'analyse. Nous devons quand même voir comment nous agissons et parlons, voir s'il vaut mieux intervenir ou rester à l'écart. Les autres sont aussi une sorte de miroir pour chacune de nous. En face d'elles, je comprends que je ne peux pas faire n'importe quoi à n'importe quel moment et n'importe comment.
> Francesca : Et pourquoi n'est-il pas important pour vous de vous regarder physiquement ?
> Sœur Rosette : Je ne sais pas. En fait, quand on a refait les cellules et acheté les placards, on nous a proposé d'y installer un miroir.
> Francesca : Et vous avez dit non …
> Sœur Rosette : Oui. Nous avons refusé et, concrètement, je m'en passe très bien. Ce n'est pas la chose la plus importante, même si je peux comprendre que l'on se regarde dans la glace quand on se peigne. Ce n'est pas un péché. Pour moi, le péché (mais cela n'a rien à voir avec le miroir proprement dit) serait le fait de vouloir être un personnage, de l'entretenir, de le construire : dans ce cas, on perd toute sa spontanéité. D'une certaine façon, on essaie de construire sa propre image en se regardant et ce n'est pas quelque chose dont on puisse être fier. Il faut éviter de s'attarder, de ressasser sur soi-même, parce que l'on peut aussi repenser aux erreurs commises et cela peut faire beaucoup de mal. Il arrive que quelqu'un nous juge et c'est très difficile, mais ce n'est pas pour cela

qu'il faut s'arrêter ; il faut savoir dire que l'on a eu tort et ensuite passer à autre chose. Mais je pense que « servir de miroir », dans un sens communautaire, signifie se raidir dans un personnage.

Francesca : Et donc se fixer sur soi-même ...

Sœur Rosette : Oui, sachant que vous risquez peut-être de couler, mais pas dans un monde de piété. On reste soi-même même dans la vie communautaire et à ce stade, pour nous réveiller, pour nous ramener à la vie de façon spontanée, il faut abattre certains murs. Je dirais que c'est un peu comme dans une famille, quand un enfant essaie de se construire ; c'est normal. Quand on se construit mal, il faut penser que c'est normal, mais qu'il faut réagir.

Francesca : Donc, vous avez refusé les miroirs pour éviter certaines choses, éviter de construire un personnage qui ne corresponde pas à la réalité.

Sœur Rosette : Tout à fait ; il faut éviter de se construire parce que cette « construction » peut éloigner l'être que l'on est vraiment. Il y a des idées auxquelles nous tenons beaucoup et, si l'on commence à « jouer » avec sa personnalité, on risque de perdre ses convictions. C'est une chose importante ; on ne doit pas jouer avec ça et il faut éviter de laisser ce désir grandir en chacun de nous (16/04/2013).

Pour ce qui est des finalités de vie spirituelle qu'elles se sont fixées, les religieuses prennent en compte la représentation mentale et non celle du miroir, généralement jugée plus véridique. Le concept de vraisemblance est étroitement lié à l'idée de perception de soi.

En conclusion : de la représentation à la réalité

La capacité d'auto-contrôle s'acquiert en gérant les représentations de l'espace et du corps. C'est la représentation, plus que la réalité, qui agit sur la personne. La recherche psychologique, grâce aux théories lacaniennes, nous a expliqué que la conquête progressive de l'identité du soi commence entre six et dix-huit mois devant sa propre image dans la glace. À ce stade, l'enfant construit une première ébauche de sa subjectivité et la met en relation avec des objets, des gens, l'environnement autour de lui. C'est plus tard que prend forme et se renouvelle continuellement l'image mentale que chacun de nous se fait de son propre corps, c'est-à-dire la façon dont notre corps nous apparaît à nous-mêmes (1950 : 30). C'est en effet à travers l'image de son semblable que, par un mécanisme d'identification, l'individu affronte le soi. Par l'expression « schéma corporel », Paul Schilder entend l'image tridimensionnelle que chacun a de lui-même, tel qu'il se construit et se déconstruit progressivement avec le passage du temps (1950). Il ne s'agit pas simplement d'une image mentale, telle qu'elle est perçue à travers les sens (ici, le miroir entre en jeu), mais de quelque chose qui implique aussi des modèles et des représentations mentales issus du contexte social. Et, ce qu'il ne faut pas oublier, écrit Schilder, c'est qu'il y a toujours une personnalité qui *ressent* la perception selon sa façon personnelle de percevoir, de sorte que « le modèle postural de notre corps est une activité interne continuelle d'*auto-construction* et *d'autodestruction*, il vit en continuant à se différencier et à s'intégrer » (1950). L'image de soi, dit Jacques Lacan, ouvre la voie au processus de fiction et à la « destination délirante » du moi qui se trouve contraint à une dialectique incessante d'identifications narcissiques avec des images provenant de l'extérieur (Lacan 1966).

Le miroir est souvent considéré comme seuil du monde invisible, permettant d'atteindre facilement le symbolique. Qu'il s'agisse de l'*imago* de son corps ou du monde environnant, c'est la force de la représentation en soi, qu'elle soit matérielle ou mentale, qui ouvre des réalités psychiques hétérogènes (Freedberg 1989) et c'est la perception représentationnelle des objets, souvent non visible à l'œil du chercheur, qui permet de se construire un sens de vie. Dans le cas qui nous intéresse, il semblerait que ce soit l'œil du photographe qui ait su cueillir la logique inhérente aux différents positionnements – ou, pour mieux dire, inhérente aux représentations religieusement connotées dans ces positionnements.

PHOTO 1 : Bénitier sur la porte du réfectoire. Photo de Franco Zecchin

Photo 2 : Intérieur d'une cellule. Photo de Franco Zecchin

PHOTO 3 : Vue du cloître avec la cloche. Photo de Franco Zecchin

Photo 4 : Clochette liturgique dans le chœur interne. Photo de Franco Zecchin

Photo 5 : Objets sur les tables du réfectoire. Photo de Franco Zecchin

Photo 6 : Salle de récréation. Photo de Franco Zecchin

PHOTO 7 : Machine à fabriquer les hosties. Photo de Franco Zecchin

PHOTO 8 : Salle de fabrication des hosties. Photo de Franco Zecchin

PHOTO 9 : Escalier menant au réfectoire. Photo de Franco Zecchin

PHOTO 10 : Couloir interne du cloître. Photo de Franco Zecchin

Photo 11 : Bibliothèque dans la salle de récréation. Photo de Franco Zecchin

REFERENCES

CURCIO, Renato
1997   *Reclusione volontaria*. Roma: Sensibili alle foglie.

FREEDBERG, David
1989   *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

JOMBART, Émile
1965   Postulat. *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*. Paris: Letouzey & Ané 7, coll. 67-70.

LACAN, Jacques
1966   *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil.

MAUSS, Marcel
1936   Les techniques du corps. *Journal de Psychologie* 32 (3-4): 27-45.

SBARDELLA, Francesca
2013   Inhabited silence. Sound constructions of monastic spatiality. *Etnográfica* 17 (3): 515-534.
2015   *Abitare il silenzio. Un'antropologa in clausura*. Roma: Viella.

SCHILDER, Paul
1950   *The image and the appearance of human body*. New York: International Universities Press.

SIMMEL, Georg
1983   *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

COPPO, Piero – GIRELLI, Laura
2012   *Schiudere soglie. Vie per la salute e la conoscenza*. Paderno Dugnano (Mi): Colibrì.

WEBER, Max
1922   *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*. In Id., *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: Mohr. Pp. 1-30.

ZARRI, Gabriella
2000   *Recinti. Donne, clausura e matrimonio nella prima età moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

New domestic landscapes: a collaborative autoethnography in times of Coronavirus in Italy

Simonetta Grilli, *University of Siena*
Pietro Meloni, *University of Perugia*

ABSTRACT

In this article we present the results of research on transformations of everyday domestic life during the first Italian coronavirus lockdown.

Covid-19 has shaken many of our convictions; it has "suspended time," forcing us to live in a condition of uncertainty. People have had to re-think their priorities and the ways they live in and use domestic space, managing a relationship of power and agency between themselves and the house. The house, as a tyrannical agent, forced people to adapt to it, and to act as a consequence of changes dictated by Covid-19.

This redefinition process has brought to light themes of great anthropological interest: new rituals, new definitions of cohabitation spaces, new needs and new fears.

As it was impossible to conduct classical fieldwork, we chose to use the method of collaborative autoethnography, involving a group of 30 students in our research. We were thus able to observe changing everyday habits and the reorganization of spaces for purposes of work or sociality, as well as changes in relations with the outside world, mediated by social networks.

KEYWORDS

material culture, Italy, home, covid-19, collaborative autoethnography

BIO

Simonetta Grilli teaches Social Anthropology and Anthropology of the family at the University of Siena. She has undertaken research on family, kinship and migration. Her current research interests are focused on gender identity and new forms of family in contemporary society. Among her publications are: *Scelte di famiglia. Tendenze della parentela nella società contemporanea* (Pisa ETS, 2010, ed. with F. Zanotelli); *Per-formare corpi. esperienze e rappresentazioni* (Milano Unicopli, 2013); *Antropologia delle famiglie contemporanee* (Milano Carocci, 2019).

Pietro Meloni received his PhD in Anthropology, Ethnology, Cultural Studies from the University of Siena in 2010, with a thesis on practices of consumption in everyday life in Tuscany.

In 2017, he obtained the Italian Scientific Certification as Associate Professor in Anthropology.

He has conducted research in Italy and he has published on issues related to mass consumption, mass media, material culture, intangible cultural heritage, fashion, craftsmanship, and everyday life.

Since 2020, Pietro is lecturer in Cultural and Social Anthropology at the University of Perugia.

His recent books include *Il tempo rievocato. Antropologia del patrimonio e cultura di massa in Toscana* (2014) and *Antropologia del consumo. Doni, merci, simboli* (2018).

pietro.meloni@unipg.it
simonetta.grilli@unisi.it

Introduction

In January 2020, we began ethnographic research on the theme of the precarization of forms of housing and domestic spaces in a few areas of northern-central Tuscany. Springing from an analysis of changes in methods of consumption, modes of access to housing and responses to housing needs, our aim was to identify adaptive tactics and agentive response strategies, both among individuals and at the family or elective group level, to the widespread condition of precariousness in which some members of the population found themselves. In particular, we were interested in understanding the domestic lifestyles of the Tuscan middle class and of new residents (specifically Chinese and Iranian).

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to reconsider our plans, as it became impossible to carry out our research using ethnographic means.

Even before the lockdown, the Chinese community of Florence had shown strong resistance to our research; fearing accusations of having brought the virus to Italy, they were concerned that details of their domestic lives might be used against them. Some of our contacts had begun to post items on Facebook with the hashtag "don't be afraid of me", an initiative launched by Chinese students in Florence after a few racist episodes in which they had been accused of bringing Covid-19 to Italy[1].
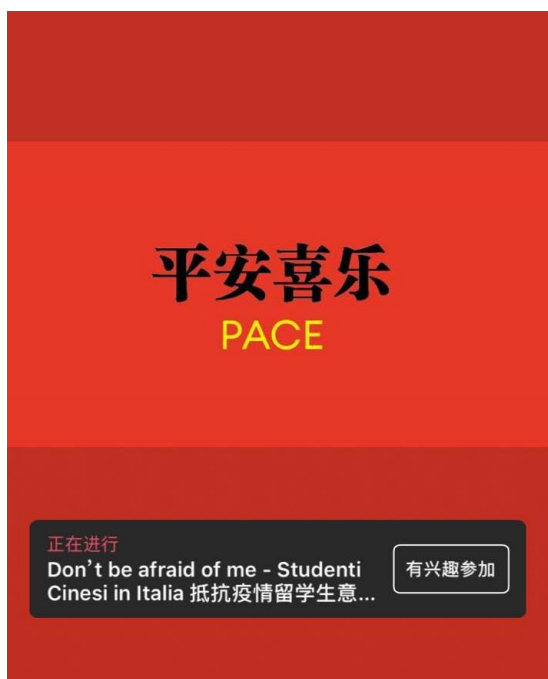

FIGURE 1: Peace.

The situation was further complicated by their legitimate hesitancy to welcome strangers into their homes in a period of such uncertainty. With the start of the lockdown in Italy on March 9, 2020, our fieldwork was scratched, and we had to abandon any possibility of carrying out our research, at least in the form in which it was originally conceived. Inevitably, we had to consider the impact that the measures put in place by the Government to combat the virus were having on domestic life.

The problem we were faced with was how to do research in the absence of a frequentable ethnographic field. The field was there, but health and safety concerns and ministerial decrees made our presence in it impossible. So, how could we do research on Covid-19 and domestic spaces, and what could we observe?

Covid-19, as an unanticipated event, brought with it some of those elements of serendipity that often characterize anthropological research (Fabietti 2012, Piasere 2002). In fact, it produced uncertainty and

---

[1] In particular, Chinese students in the degree course in Design at the University of Florence reacted to a professor who had asked all Chinese students who had recently been in China not to attend his exam, as they may have been infected with the virus. See:
https://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/02/03/news/coronavirus-247468787/

precarization in the domestic sphere, constricting people's live to the circumscribed dimension of the home, which became a sort of exclusive micro-world for each of us (Molinari 2020) in which the entirety of our social lives seemed to take place, aside from those extensions – balconies, terraces, gardens, etc. – that were capable of rendering the space porous (Bassetti 2020). Not surprisingly, balconies, verandas, gardens and courtyards became places in which to meet others, spaces more intensely lived-in, re-functionalized as places in which to work and spend time. These spaces not only expand the home, but are true public extensions of domestic life, allowing for forms of interaction that, at least in part, mitigate the solitude and limitation of life in "confinement" (Molinari 2020, Bassetti 2020).

Covid-19 shook many of our convictions; it "suspended time" (Aime, Favole, Remotti 2020), forcing us to live in a condition of uncertainty. People had to rethink their priorities and how they view and experience domestic space, managing a relationship of power and agency between themselves and the home (Miller 2010; Lusini, Meloni 2014). The house, as an agent of tyranny (Douglas 1991), forced people to adapt to it, to act in response to changes dictated by Covid-19. This redefinition brought to light themes of great anthropological interest. The house as a threshold, a *limen*, allowed us to explore the relationship between house and rite (Van Gennep 1909; Turner 1982; Segalen 1998; Miller 2001) at a time when the crisis of the pandemic obliged us to rethink everyday behaviors within the domestic space. The subject, in its broader identitary conception, took on importance in relation to the house, the pandemic, bodies and things. Bodies and the house are, in fact, the focus of our research.

Relationships with food and hygiene entered new frontiers, reshaping boundaries between the dimensions of the pure and the impure (Douglas 1966). Social uncertainty fueled forms of distrust and diffidence (Carey 2017) and new feelings of guilt (Moretti 2020; Boni 2020). Domestic life was redesigned around the virus, bringing forms of creativity and resistance into play to rethink a shared everyday space.

The pandemic has redefined our habits and consumption. Time and space have changed, becoming more uncertain; they are both too much and too little, free and stolen. We now have an excess of time, because everything has slowed down. Shut in the house all day – at least those who were not forced to work during the first phase of the lockdown in Italy -, slowed-down time often proved to be "too much" for us. Time, which we have continuously been trying to catch up with in our late modern era, scurrying "like hamsters in a wheel" (Rosa 2010), is now at our disposal, although we don't quite know what to do with it – many have spent the time on social media, others have rediscovered the importance of family togetherness, and still others have dedicated themselves to self-care or DIY. Space, on the other hand, has been taken away from us. Empty, non-navigable, silent. We have much more space, but it is not for us: it is the space of absence, of the non-place (de Certeau 1990; Augé 1992; Dalla Vigna 2020), of uncertainty.

While the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte bid all citizens to remain at home – the hashtag #iorestoacasa (#Istayhome) quickly became the symbol of resistance against the virus –, people found themselves facing an intangible problem, the causes of which, beyond facile conspiracy theories, were completely unknown.

Figure 2: Ministerial advertising campaign

The crisis generated by the virus, a non-human agent (Latour 1991) invading people's daily lives, has produced new forms of uncertainty and new actors to deal with. Like the plague that struck Orano, the Algerian city Camus invented as the setting for his 1947 novel, Covid-19 emerged as a sort of concrete abstraction, an invisible agent that produces new fears and new forms of powerlessness, forcing us to participate in rituals of isolation in which, confined to domestic spaces, we perform acts of purification in the hope of staving off the unknown.

We realized the importance of an anthropological and ethnographic approach to understanding the effects of Covid-19 on people's lives. While several themes appeared immediately clear to us, and to many other social scientists, the problem was determining how to do anthropological – and thus ethnography-based – research at a time when proximity to subjects was proscribed.

Methodology

During the first phase of lockdown in Italy[2], initiatives focusing on domestic stories and the coronavirus proliferated. Numerous blogs were launched, including anthropology-oriented ones, as well as newspaper sections, Facebook pages and institutional initiatives. The house and the domestic sphere have become themes of general interest, a global social element (Durkheim 2013; Mauss 1991) that stimulated the interest of many.

The object of our enquiry, which is habitually studied by anthropologists focusing on the family, material culture and consumption, has become hyper-narrated and hyper-considered by analysts, social scientists and the general public. The house has become a hyper-place (Palumbo 2006); everyone has been talking about it, as well as enduring confinement with different levels of intensity. Everyone has experienced the domestic dimension in a condition of "constriction", of external regulation.

In March, we too decided to do research on domestic spaces and Covid-19. An event of such global proportions could hardly escape the critical gaze of anthropologists, although it must be noted that our interpretative work – like that of many colleagues around the world – is just beginning.

Given the impossibility of carrying out ethnographic investigations in the usual ways (observation of real-life events and contexts, in-person interviews, etc.), we had to reorganize and rethink the ethnographic field[3]. First and foremost, we had to identify alternative modes of communication, exchange and co-production of knowledge; we shifted to the use and enhancement of communication technologies that became essential tools for much of the population in this situation, both to maintain social relations and to work.

For our research, which began with the first phase of lockdown in Italy and went on until early June – i.e., the middle of the second phase -, we involved students from our respective courses – social anthropology and anthropology of consumption -, creating a research group of about 30 people[4].

The problem, obviously, was to determine which methodology to use for this type of research. For many, netnography (Kozinets 2010) and the ethnographic use of media (Miller, Madianou 2012; Pink et alii 2016; Hine 2015) have been key tools in the construction of efficacious narrative paths, analyzing social media participation and the flow of information produced by social actors. Electronic media are by now in any case a fieldwork terrain solidly frequented by anthropologists (Miller, Slater 2000; Miller 2011, 2016; Miller et alii 2016; Miller, Sinanan 2017). We likewise chose these methodologies, but also added other approaches, because analyzing media alone seemed insufficient to understanding a private context like the domestic space. We thus decided to foster an autoethnographic process with our students (Chang 2008), which quickly evolved into collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Faith, Hernandez

2013). Specifically, we asked the students to do ethnographic research in the domestic space they found themselves in at the time of the first lockdown, and subsequently to discuss the data they collected with the work group. We then collected audio and video interviews and photographic material of various domestic spaces and/or from social networks. The house became a microcosm in which to analyze everyday interactions among people who found themselves living together twenty-four hours a day (from nuclear families to roommates). We observed changes in daily habits and the reorganization of spaces for work or sociality, as well as changes in relations with the outside world, mediated by social networks. Finally, we concentrated on the body, intended as an instrument of communication between interior and exterior, an object of purification rites, that had to be redefined in view of rules often experienced as coercive.

This shared process, which initially seemed typical of focus groups, quickly turned into a real collaborative autoethnography (CAE). For Chang, Faith and Hernandez (2013: 17), CAE

> is a qualitative research method that is simultaneously collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnographic. Putting these three terms together in one definition may appear to be oxymoronic. Ethnography, for example, is the study of a cultural group; therefore, pairing it with autobiography, the study of self, seems contradictory. Despite the seeming inconsistency, some qualitative researchers have succeeded in joining these two conceptual opposites to create a research method called autoethnography (AE). To this relatively recent approach to qualitative inquiry, we are adding another dimension — collaboration. The notion of collaboration requiring group interaction seems directly at odds with that of a study of self. How can a study of self be done collaboratively? To answer this question, we ask you to imagine a group of researchers pooling their stories to find some commonalities and differences and then wrestling with these stories to discover the meanings of the stories in relation to their sociocultural contexts.

Asking students to launch themselves into this autoethnographic process of examing their own experiences in the restricted spaces of their houses entailed guiding them towards an anthropological research practice (interviewing co-habitants, learning to observe everyday contexts, recording forms of communication with the outside world), the equivalent of an "intentional and autonomous extension of experience" (Piasere 2002: 32) that encouraged them to reflect on the importance of "living in a conscious way" as opposed to "just living." In a caesura from ordinary existence, each one of them began to observe, voluntarily applying self-observation techniques to their everyday lives, transforming their personal experience into an ethnographic field. They were convinced that they were taking advantage of an exceptional situation, a sort of collective social engineering experiment[5] (rules of behavior often furnished coercively, models of behavior were adapted to the personal and public sphere, were we all forced to follow the same directive, under the guidance of the same director) that could shed light on the great social, economic and gender differences that characterize society.

We created a shared Google Drive folder, in which each student and instructor could create his/her own space to add images, video, audio, links to sites, chapters of books, etc. A small database of ethnographic information quickly took shape, which we periodically shared and discussed. This research method helped us to identify themes of common interest: homogeneous habitus (Bourdieu 2020)[6] emerged that allowed us to develop cohesive paths and theories that were useful to the entire work group. We noted similarities and differences in terms of class, geography and gender, and identified key themes on which to work, which then became the focus of our reflection. In a style that may in some ways seem post-modern, we tried to produce a polyphonic process, albeit always acknowledging each researcher's authorship and contribution.

The data we present here were thus collected by different people and discussed during work meetings. We added to them our own research processes, as well as 25 interviews with people whose domestic spaces we were already familiar with (through research or personal knowledge), collected during the

---

[5] The notion of the experiment has long seemed extraneous to the field of anthropology, although it is sometimes used to define ethnographic practice (Piasere 2002). Today, springing from investigations that combine design, digital culture and data ethnography (Knox, Nafus 2018; Neff, Nafus 2016), experimental practice is widely used in anthropology.

[6] For Bourdieu, homogeneous habitus are those that fit statistical classes gathering data from individuals subject to the same conditions, and are also similar with regard to incorporated social structures, i.e. that correspond to the same habitus of class and class of habitus. In our case, although there are differences – sometimes marked – in habitus, the fact of everyone being exposed to the same condition (the lockdown) allowed us to construct a homogeneous discourse on the everyday experience and phenomenology of the pandemic.

lockdown via Skype. We asked the interviewees to tell us about their daily lives, how they manage domestic spaces, changes experienced, future plans. With them, we favored a "retrospective approach" (Piasere 2002) based on reflection. That is, we asked people to reflect on their past and make some sort of relation with the present, and we used our own personal lives and informal frequentations as fieldwork, thus highlighting a series of competences and information acquired, sometimes unintentionally.

The main themes that emerged, which we present in the following paragraphs, concern the densification[7] of domestic spaces, where time and space contract and expand depending on their size, the number of people, specific places, uses, etc. Densification is followed by the redefinition, resignification and re-functionalization of a few domestic spaces, which we found above all in the reorganization of spaces for purposes of teleworking and the sharing of the house by all of its inhabitants. This reorganization of spaces also brought about a control of time, since the distinction between free time and work time is blurred, often generating inconvenience in the management of daily activities. We then analyzed the relationship between interior/inside and exterior/outside, the problem of the threshold and barriers, and the question of pure and impure (Douglas 1966) produced by the virus. These issues led to the creation of new daily rites, many of which were linked to hygiene and new forms of family and virtual socialization. These rites gave us the opportunity to observe new daily habits, routines acquired during lockdown. Finally, we dealt with how relationships – old and new – were configured during the lockdown, how family and domestic arrangements were reorganized, how cohabitation was restructured and which forms of family relations were impacted.

Precariousness and Commodification

Over the course of a few weeks, the everyday lives of most of the world's population were turned topsy-turvy. Italy was exemplary from this point of view. Among the worst-hit nations – at least in terms of official data from the first half of 2020 – it reacted to the initial period of Covid-19 contagion with a nearly 3-month lockdown. In this period, people could only leave their homes for strict necessities, i.e. to purchase food and medicine or to assist non-self-sufficient relatives. When they went out, they had to carry a self-certification form to show police if they were stopped for a spot check.

FIGURE 3: Self-Certification. Photo by Martina Luiso.
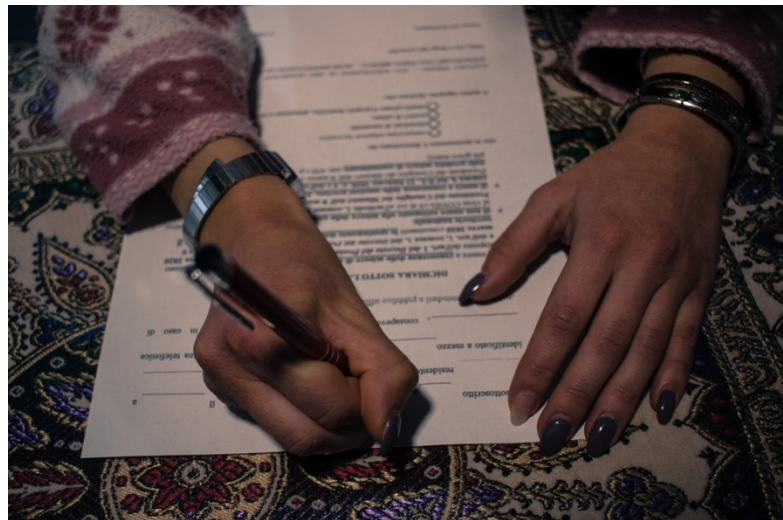
In many cases, these limitations generated hoarding of supplies, for fear of being left without food. Supermarkets were besieged, with long lines to enter and entire sectors emptied of goods. Prime Minister Conte repeatedly reassured the population that supply chains were in no danger of being disrupted.

---

[7] The idea of densification comes from Annette B. Weiner (1994)

FIGURE 4: Florence Supermarket. Photo by Lu Ji.

A local online daily newspaper[8] reported the complaint of a person who compared the supermarket to the trenches, a theater of war where cashiers are forced to work under precarious health and safety conditions due to the excessive crowds of people who fail to respect the rules. News stories of this type, and subsequent comments on social networks – usually aggressive or in denial – were heard daily. In realty, in our experience of ethnography, the supermarket appeared to be a fairly well-regulated place, with people diligently adopting the suggested behaviors. Certainly, many of us saw several members of the same family group in the supermarket, despite explicit requests that only a single member per family do the shopping; or people who failed to respect the recommended distance, or others who wore their masks below their noses, or did not use disinfectant gel on their hands because they were wearing latex gloves. But overall, anomalous behaviors were generally limited in proportion to correct ones. Still, we saw continuous complaints – particularly via social networks, but also in informal accounts – of people who felt threatened by others' behavior.

After shopping at the supermarket he habitually patronizes, a hospital physician (who works in a sector not involved in Covid-19 care) told us how negative his shopping experience had been. Someone had run into him with a cart, hurting his knee, and instead of apologizing, had shouted at him to get out of the way. He declared that if he'd had a gun he would have shot everyone. One of our interlocutors, in reference to the same supermarket, declared that he would have gladly tossed a bomb into it. One of us went to that supermarket during the lockdown, noting an excessive number of people present, and a general sense of unease and riskiness. But what pushes apparently "normal" people to wish others dead? What produces such a strong feeling of diffidence as to conjure up the misery of the world? (Bourdieu 2015). In a recent text on hate speech and feelings of hatred (Meloni, Zanotelli 2020), we maintained that access to consumption can make structural asymmetries in society emerge in violent ways. In times of crisis, the concept of community – of which anthropologists have often been critical (Herzfeld 1996; Palumbo 2003) – has seemed completely inadequate in the face of the individualism that capitalism has produced in recent years.

Here we can add some other elements as well. The disorientation generated by the pandemic led to the breakdown of normal everyday coordinates of orientation, making places opaque, suddenly unfamiliar. There was a dis-embedding (Giddens 1990) that disrupted everyday routines (Bausinger 2008), making everything more uncertain and, in some ways, unfathomable. Many of our friends,

---

[8] https://www.sienanews.it/toscana/siena/commessi-supermercato-siena/

relatives, acquaintances and research participants were afraid to go out during the first part of the lockdown, and several elderly people among them never left their houses[9].

In a climate of great uncertainty, in which trips outside the home are almost exclusively concerned with the purchase of food and supplies, diffidence is often transformed into social hatred and penal populism (Fassin 2017), turned against the institutions or people encountered in circumscribed daily activities. Several anthropologists (Cutolo 2020; Palumbo 2020; Taliani 2020; Coffin 2020), with educational or informational aims, have pointed the finger at the authoritarian tendencies of the State of exception (Agamben 2003), which embodied images of a type of media-based control that reached its fullest realization in surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2019).

The often-contradictory instructions issued by the government, health institutions and experts to reduce the risk of contagion calling on subjects to exercise control over their own physical habits: disinfection of hands, use of masks, physical distancing between bodies ("maintain a distance of 1.8 meters" read signs that quickly appeared in shops, medical offices, etc.). The corporal self-discipline requested, and in some cases imposed, in public spaces (masks required to enter shops, use of hand sanitizer, in some cases allowing one's temperature to be taken) did not completely cease once we crossed the thresholds of our homes: shoes left outside the door, removal of clothing and hand disinfection marked the entrance into the domestic space, purification practices that each of us carried out in more or less strict and ritualized forms, but that reinforced the boundary between inside and outside. The sensation many people had was that the interior space had to be defended from the risk of any contamination that might be borne by bodies, shoes, clothes, and even merchandise; it is not surprising that many people began to disinfect foods (fruit, vegetables, packages, boxes, etc.) and other items systematically, a gesture that further serves to sacralize the interior domestic space.

Tidying and cleaning the house also went well beyond the mere need to deal with the inevitable entropy that overtakes domestic spaces lived in day after day; purifying and keeping things in order in our domestic nest has an ethical value, and is a gesture of responsibility to ourselves and to others. In general, housekeeping (in terms of cleaning, tidying up, etc.) and homemaking (the discovery or rediscovery of the symbolic value of food and its preparation) can be read as gestures of caring, a sort of maintenance of oneself and one's relationships.

The race to stockpile supplies took on several aspects, giving us the opportunity to outline new levels of fear, individualism and interpretation of the pandemic phenomenon.

Giovanna is 65 years old. She never went out during the lockdown, for fear of contracting the virus. She is a Jehovah's Witness and interprets the pandemic as a sign of the end of the world – Armageddon. In agreement with her religious congregation, she began to stockpile food – sending her children to do the shopping – in preparation for the apocalypse. She also packed a suitcase with a few changes of clothes, some towels, a few bottles of water, some canned food and medicine, just to be prepared. One of her two children does the shopping, making a list via a telephone app and going to buy the items requested. He brings the shopping to his mother, but does not enter the house, leaving it in front of the door on a doormat covered with a plastic bag. He then telephones his mother, and they say hello and goodbye each from his or her side of the closed door, without seeing one another. Then Giovanna opens the door and begins disinfecting each item with alcohol or other sanitizers. She does not want any contaminating agent to enter her house.

Giulia tells us that when she returns from the supermarket, her mother washes all of the fruit in hot water, because she doesn't trust whoever may have touched it before her. She also cleans the plastic packaging of items like pasta, and then washes the bags she used to carry the shopping, because they touched the supermarket cart. She is not the only one who does this; this particular type of concern proves to be quite widespread.

Francesca, as soon as she comes home from doing the shopping, puts the bread she bought at the bakery into the oven at 180° for 5 minutes, convinced that doing so kills the virus and eliminates any risk of contagion. She is apprehensive about bread because it is a product that is made by hand and is thus touched by an unknown person.

---

[9] Various psychologists have begun to speak of a sort of agoraphobia to explain this fear of returning to everyday life and resuming the normal rhythms of existence. Covid-19 has produced behaviors similar to those of hikikomori (Kaneko 2009), young Japanese people who reject society and seclude themselves in their houses, going out only to buy basic necessities.

Viviana is afraid of running out of food. She wants to see the refrigerator constantly full. She is afraid of running out of bread, oil, pasta, tomatoes – all of the things an Italian seems incapable of doing without. She hoards food, buying more than she needs.

Vittoria tells us she saw a woman buy 16 packets of yeast at the little shop near her house where she buys food.

Statistics tell us that sales of flour increased by 88% during the lockdown. Everyone is making homemade pizza and bread. Vittoria herself bakes her own bread, because that way she can choose the best flour – whole grain, organic, ancient grains.

Elisa, who spent the lockdown in a house in the country with her family, recognizes the importance of cooking as a social experience. She and her mother make pizza and sweets, which they then eat with the rest of the family.

FIGURE 5: Refrigerator. Photo by Denise Pettinato.

Many people have begun cooking dishes that call for long preparation times because they have more time available, but also because they have less trust in fresh products, and they feel that making bread, pizza and sweets at home is safer than buying them at the supermarket.

These initial ethnographic examples tell us something that many of our experiences had in common: Covid-19 changed our relationships with food products; we no longer trust their origins, their production chains and processes. The lack of a cultural biography of food products (Kopytoff 1986) makes us more insecure. Now, merchandise is impure, contaminated. How can we explain this – certainly legitimate – preoccupation with contagion?

FIGURES 6-7: Yeast and pizza dough. Photos by Chiara Renzi.

Mary Douglas (1984) wrote an enlightening essay in the 1960s on the relationship between pure and impure as categories we use to lend order to the world. For Douglas, there is a close connection between the idea of purity and that of danger, based on our perception of what is licit, what should be done and how it should be done; the idea of the meaning of order and the organization of the world we live in. The impure is not only the opposite of the pure, but represents dirtiness, a category that does not have to do directly with hygiene, but with the arrangement of things in space according to an order that is considered correct. In fact, Douglas writes:

> Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; out-door things indoors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications (Douglas 1984: 37).

We can explore this idea of order with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. What is dirty? What is impure? Food products, particularly fresh, unpackaged ones (bread, fruit, vegetables, etc.) have suddenly become impure. Orthorexic society (Nicolosi 2007), obsessed with healthy, fresh, organic food, finds itself faced with a new ambiguousness that muddles the fresh/pure binomial, which no longer seems to hold in the presence of potential contamination.

Apotropaic rituals are necessary to ward off the virus (the washing of all packaging, the re-heating of bread). Goods are impure simply because they come from the outside world, and this inside/outside opposition is one of the distinctive traits of the Covid-19 pandemic (Guigoni, Ferrari 2020). Objects are pure and impure, but so are spaces, particularly in the contrast between the inside of the domestic sphere and the outside of public space.

The human body is also impacted by these preoccupations. Rituals in preparation for leaving and re-entering the house evoke Van Gennep's threshold rites (1909), centered on emphasizing the distance

between inside and outside. Masks, gloves and hand sanitizer are part of a reexamination of the self in relation to others. The question of social distancing – or rather, physical distancing, since it is mainly a matter of bodily distancing – has forced us to deal with the problem of reconsidering distances between bodies, redefining intimacy and seeking a new equilibrium between the distancing of bodies and the intensity of our romantic, family, social and cultural relationships.

FIGURE 8: Hand washing. Photo by Pietro Meloni.

Lu tells us that she rarely leaves the house for fear of contagion. However, she is not afraid to go food shopping; she is convinced that supermarkets are very clean places. She has bought alcohol and put it in a spray bottle to use on her hands, mask, shoes and the food she buys. She sprays everything multiple times.

Giulia, who kept a field diary throughout her research, tried to analyze hands as an instrument of tactile and sensorial knowledge. Hands are a tool – like Mauss' body (1991) – and their touch (Bromberger 2007) allows us to relate with the world. We are thus seeing a precarization that involves our actions and our bodies, the exterior and interior worlds, goods and spaces.

The densification of spaces

With the lockdown, the space of the house became an enclosed microcosm, a constricted but dense world, a place for life, work, education and exclusive sociality.

Carlotta lives in Paris in a medium-sized apartment of about 70 square meters. Her family is made up of four people, herself, two small children and her husband.

Before the pandemic, she and her husband could count on the help of a South American babysitter who took care of the children, but under lockdown in France, they had to let her go, and Carlotta became a full-time mom for a few months, as well as a home-school teacher. Her husband is now working from home and needs a room to himself. Carlotta and the children spend their time mainly in the kitchen and the bedroom, while the small living room is reserved for her husband to work in. Obviously, this doesn't always work well, and the family reorganizes the situation from time to time. In fact, while we are speaking via Skype, Carlotta moves into the kitchen, which opens onto the living room, and we can see her husband at his computer behind her. They both use earphones so as not to disturb one another, and she holds the baby on her lap so she won't crawl off and disturb her father.

FIGURE 9: Family Portrait. Photo by Carlotta Destro.

Sara lives in Milan, where she is a freelance journalist. She lives in an approximately 60-square-meter house on the northern edge of the city. She, too, lives with her husband and two children. Her husband is busy working from home all day, and occupies the bedroom, which he has adapted to use as a temporary office. He remains shut in the room all day, as he needs to concentrate. Sara looks after the children and tries to write articles for national newspapers. She is less productive than usual, since her available time to focus on writing is limited, and commissions for pieces all revolve around Covid-19. Speaking about how she manages domestic spaces, she tells us that it has been difficult at times to do telephone interviews; she often shuts herself in the bathroom as an "emergency" space that does not isolate her from her children. In a few particular cases, like, for example, an interview with a government minister, she "took refuge" in her car, a "private place" outside her home which, in this period, has proven to be a precious additional extension of the domestic space. A part of home outside the house, for those who have little space, can become fundamental. It can also guarantee privacy, which is completely absent in the house. In fact, since there is no-one in the street outside, the car is effectively a private space.

Alessandra is following online university lectures from the room she shares with a roommate. She is sitting on the bed in front of her computer, and using headphones since, as we can see, her roommate is nearby, also wearing headphones and watching another online lecture. They both occupy the same physical space, but are in different virtual places.

Michele is an Italian researcher who works in Ontario. He was stuck in Italy during the lockdown, in a house he was renting. He is happy not to have to return to Canada and to be able to spend the entire summer in Italy, but is sorry to be far away from his girlfriend, who lives in Hungary and whom he cannot visit. During the day, while he works, he video-calls his girlfriend and sets his smartphone near his computer, so they can see each other while they go about their day's work. They are physically

distant, but they feel close, albeit virtually. They see one another, and thus, in a certain way, are able to reduce the distance that separates them.

These examples demonstrate how domestic space has become "dense": the house has been "densified", to use the term Weiner (1994) applied in defining the objects of the Trobriander kula. The functions carried out inside it have multiplied. In the (restricted or expanded) domestic space, we do everything: we live, work, teach, socialize, develop and maintain relationships with the outside (relatives, friends, work colleagues, classmates, students, etc.) mediated by technology.

Figure 10: Lunch. Photo by Carlotta Destro.

The multiplication and layering of functions has required various types of "interventions", adjustments, divisions, conversions, the creation or elimination of barriers. This general rethinking has amplified the "tyranny" of the material dimension of the house (too-small size, lack of a garden, and other more subtle tyrannies) and efforts to combat it, to assert an agency on the part of its inhabitants who, although aware that they must come to terms with it, have, within certain limits, sought to "dominate" it, implementing various sorts of tactics (de Certeau 1990).

Chronofagia (Mazzocco 2019), that particularly capitalist condition that eats away at our time, has not abated during the pandemic. Work has invaded many people's homes, continuously demanding acceleration. The slowing down of movement through space, which has reduced the carbon economy (Eriksen 2017) – people have traveled much less by car, train and airplane – has, however, disproportionately increased the silicon economy, demanding a continuous presence in the virtual world.

To inhabit a house in the time of Covid-19, it has often been necessary to revamp its spaces, which are in many cases subject to an intense re-signification and re-functionalization. Rooms have ceased to have single functions, but instead contain a plurality of activities and functions: the kitchen has become a workplace; the living room a university classroom or meeting room; the bedroom a gym, and so forth. The house has seen its functions multiply. But in the effort to rearrange domestic spaces, we might also see something else indicative of the existential condition imposed by confinement.

Covid-19 has in fact taught us that spending a quarantine in a domestic space inevitably requires a willingness to negotiate with other family members or roommates regarding our possible movements. We simply cannot do otherwise, although said negotiation can take on histrionic tones and spill over into conflict when the space is limited and the inhabitants numerous[10].

The concept of privacy is brought into question, roles must be redefined, and cooperation is not always easy, or even possible. Spaces, granted agency, influence our freedom of choice and of action, and at the same time can be rearranged and re-functionalized, becoming objects of contention or of negotiation among their inhabitants. Gaia tells us about certain "intrusions" that generate tension between her and her boyfriend, indicating that the spaces of their small apartment have been specialized and charged with new functions. Friction between them, as would be expected, concerns the boundaries; when, during an activity they are carrying out in a specific space, they need to "intrude" on another zone of the house, perhaps passing through the background of a video meeting to get a glass of water, or talking on the phone in a room where the other is participating in a video conference.

The transformation of a domestic space into a workplace creates several levels of blending, involving the management of activities and of everyday relationships. Not only are physical spaces redefined, they also often generate disorder in the effective use they were intended for and are now needed for. While it is true that the possibility of working from home seemed a privilege reserved for certain social class groups, it is also true that in a circumstance of confinement in the house, the risks of transforming the home into a work space through smart working became fully evident: the "domestication of work" (Morini 2010) almost inevitably forces people to adapt their private lives to the rhythms and demands of work, which not only takes on expanded hours, but ends up invading every interstice of private life.

Being based in the home during the pandemic certainly led to an intensification of the use of digital technologies, which guaranteed not only smart working, but also forms of social interaction with the outside that were otherwise impossible. It is worth underscoring that digital technologies inevitably changed the very perception of the spaces we occupy, and consequently the rules of self-presentation (Goffman 1959). The overlap between places intended for public use and places reserved for personal life and self-care *produced* inside the house reproposed the separation between *backstage* and *frontstage*, to apply the theatrical metaphors used by Erving Goffman. This separation has obviously been handled in an often complex, opaque, fluctuating way. While some people working from home stopped paying attention to how they presented themselves "in public", for example during work meetings, others maintained a certain control over their image, implementing the same daily self-care practices such as shaving, wearing perfume, styling their hair, putting on makeup, etc., and wearing appropriate, albeit informal, clothing) a sweater as opposed to a shirt and tie, etc.).

The important aspect to highlight is that the house in this circumstance has become not only a workplace, but also a stage. People who teach online lessons to an audience of students, participate in a work meeting or simply converse with friends show their face, or often the upper half of their body, framed in a scene: the bookshelf or furniture behind them, sometimes a painting or a particular corner of the house, or simply a blank wall, serves as a sort of theatrical stage set. Before connecting with the outside world, even the most distracted and least "attention-seeking" person thinks about how to set the scene in which his performance will take place. The domestic landscape on view behind the person reveals one or more elements of his biography or his family situation. This is why Valeria asked her husband to switch places with her when she had to participate in some important meetings, because from her desk her bed and a white wall could be seen behind her, a "not very professional" background in her opinion.

The densification of spaces marked the contrast between inside and outside, ritualizing many people's domestic activities and relations. If Covid-19 can be considered an event of "suspension" (Remotti 2020), people's response was often to lend rhythm to their daily activities in a codified way. The threshold of the house took on a function of separation, a symbolic passageway between what we consider safe (inside) and what we consider dangerous (the outside world).

Maria, a student, and her flat mates set up a neutral, transitional space inside the house, in a hallway by the entrance. The corridor is utilized for putting on outerwear before going to do the shopping, and

---

[10] It goes without saying that living in a hovel in Naples, or being confined to one of the ghettos in which migrant field workers are crammed on the edges of many southern Italian cities, is not the equivalent of living in a city center or suburb with a garden, or a country house in the Chianti.

removing it upon returning. A threshold within the threshold. The entryway now contains shoes, gloves, jackets and all other items of clothing that have contaminated by contact with the outside. Before being brought into the interior of the house, they must be disinfected with alcohol – rendered pure and suitable for the space of everyday life.
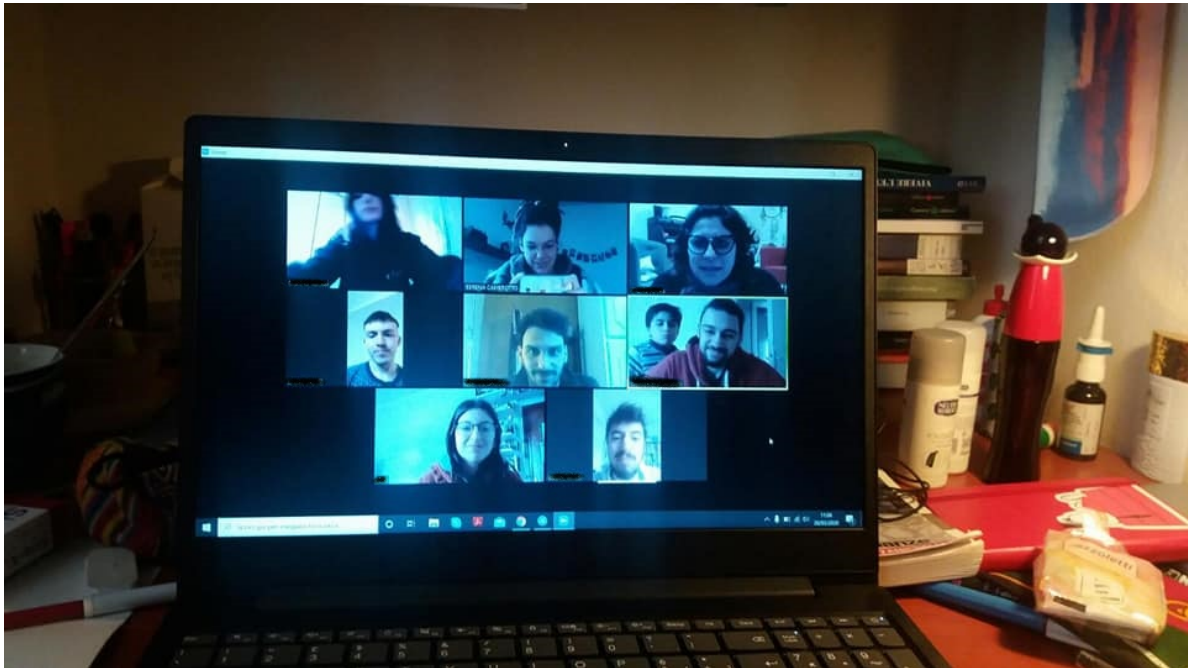

FIGURE 11: Work meeting. Photo by Serena Camerotto.

The relationship between inside and outside has also produced a sense of disorientation, which translates into a fragility of the sense of community. Although there have been many initiatives to support a sense of shared belonging, social distancing policies have inevitably generated codified behaviors that manifest forms of diffidence and fear of others.

This logic of suspicion undermined even the closest, most trusting relationships. This is the case of Lucrezia, who tells us about her father, a family doctor in Lombardy, who, having shown flu-like symptoms, was treated as if he were a Covid-19 patient while waiting to do a swab test to verify whether or not he actually had the virus. The presence of a sick person in the domestic sphere forces the family nucleus to rethink spaces, time and personal relations. The "unverified illness"- the term Lucrezia uses to define this situation in which the family did not know the seriousness of her father's illness – destabilized the idea of the domestic space as a safe space. If there is a sick person present, the house stops being a protected space, and ritual practices intensify, involving all zones of the domestic interior. Lucrezia and her mother studied all of the symptoms to be able to recognize the illness, and reorganized the house while they waited for the swab, which her father was able to obtain after 8 days. This week in limbo generated a spatial, temporal and identitary crisis. They divided the house into two strictly separate spaces, one for her father and the other for the rest of the family. These two domestic spheres came into contact only by means of a neutral zone, a corridor that linked the two worlds. A transitional zone, a threshold to cross only with the greatest attention, and only when absolutely necessary: to check on the state of her father's health, take him food, aerate that part of the house and clean the bathroom.

The contamination of a family member generates the sort of ambiguity we see in the *homo sacer* (Agamben 2005; Otto 2010). The sick person is impure, sacred and *sacer*, contaminated and contaminant. As in the case of possession, the patient is *acted-on* (de Martino 1973, 2020) and is simultaneously isolated, feared and venerated.

FIGURES 12-13: Separate spaces. Photo by Lucrezia Travella.

The ambiguity generated by the presence of a sick person in the house leads us to reflect on the ambivalence of spaces during the pandemic. Springing from observation of practices and making reference to Bourdieu's structural constructivist approach (Paolucci 2009), we tried to translate this situation into a diagram in which relations between pureness and contamination, public and private, nearness and farness, help us to understand some of the behaviors of the social actors we worked with. The diagram is based on observation of practices, and applies to the situation we analyzed.
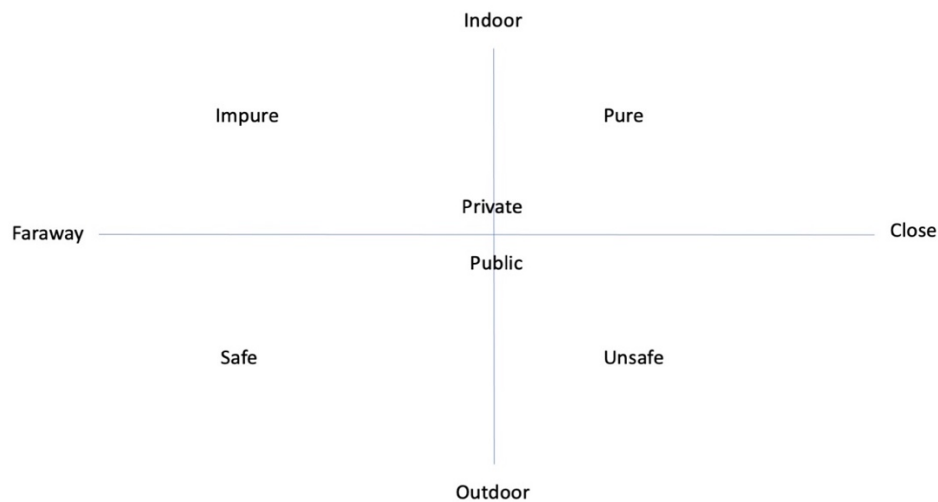
The spaces in opposition are indoor/outdoor, faraway/close, pure/impure, safe/unsafe and public/private. These elements allow us to easily read behaviors from Phase 1. In the private sphere, the upper part of the diagram, the axis linking indoor and close defines a relationship of purity, which we can hypothesize is possible when all family members are healthy. But what happens when someone becomes ill inside the house? The axis becomes inside/faraway, which establishes a relationship of impurity. There are numerous cases of people who, living with a relative who had Covid-19, divided the house into safe and unsafe, pure and impure places, establishing where and when each individual member of the domestic group could move.

The public sphere is characterized by two different oppositions. The axis that joins faraway/outdoor establishes a relationship of safety (the famous meter of distance to maintain in public places), while the outdoor/close axis represents an unsafe zone to be avoided.

"I'm staying home": but with whom?

The health emergency has highlighted certain traits of the family milieu, and, as an outside agent, has shaken the foundational dimension of our being. Crises do, after all, often serve as highlighters/catalyzers (Alliegro 2020). This circumstance emphasized the strength of some ties and some familiar experiences, and in contrast, the weakness (fragility, instability) of other ties and relational experiences, for socio-economic reasons (financial and housing precariousness), but also due to the lack of juridical recognition (for example, of the children of homosexual couples) or dependence on juridical, medical and other "procedures" (Grilli 2019)[11].

The fragments of everyday life gathered from our circles of friends, acquaintances and students highlighted, as we have said, important aspects regarding the ways people relate to domesticity: what we can do in the house, where our house ends, what it means to feel at home. Their accounts also conveyed the multiplicity of "domestic arrangements" that came about during the period of Covid-19.

Some people found themselves "becoming families" almost by chance, with people they did not choose, similarly to what happens in urban cohabitation situations that bring together people who are neither relatives nor friends under the same roof (Acquistapace 2020). As one of our interlocutors asserted: "my situation is more a temporary sojourn than cohabitation!". Others, however, emphasized that their family is an extended one, with grandparents stably cohabiting – in some cases so as to be able to count on their help taking care of grandchildren, and in others to be able to provide them with continuous assistance. Many, however, following government guidance, kept their grandparents or elderly parents at a distance to protect them from the risk of possible contagion. While many found themselves living alone (involuntarily, being stuck in the city where they worked or studied rather than their hometown), others began or continued cohabitation experiences, like Giovanni, a university student who during the lockdown lived off and on with his girlfriend, who periodically stayed with him in the apartment he shared with another student; and Silvia, who went to live with her boyfriend in an apartment near her mother's home, thus beginning a cohabitation experience close to her family home, something she had not imagined doing before now. For others, it was a time to reunite a family that had been living separately, such as those of students who returned to their family homes after the closure of universities.

During focus groups with students, in which we discussed the progress of our research, Carolina told us she had experienced 3 types of cohabitation. In the first part of the lockdown, she lived with two friends in a flat in the center of Siena, then she moved in with her boyfriend, who shared a flat with another student outside Siena, and finally, as soon as the government allowed it[12], went back to her parents' home in the Marches, where she discovered that they had intensified their relationship with a neighboring family, with shared lunches in the garden on Easter and other holidays.

In some cases, neighborly relationships were rediscovered or newly developed. Tamara and Luca, a couple of fifty-something professionals whose children were working in New Zealand, tell us that they created a sort of family with the neighbor who rents the apartment across from theirs. Amalia spent the lockdown in a student residence in Siena, along with her boyfriend. She found it difficult to manage spaces and maintain distancing with other students in the university structure because, she tells us, everyone was too eager to share spaces and meals, considering the residence a space in which to recreate a sort of extended family atmosphere.

The house, then, was able to reunite and to separate, to recreate extended families or, on the contrary, shrink them (in the case of those who were unable to rejoin their families). It also highlighted processes of selection and preferentiality which, while previously not made explicit, emerged forcefully during the lockdown as necessary choices regarding personal/intimate relationships. The fluid, bargain-and-compromise nature of making families also became very much apparent. Some cohabitations were generated because people and situations were already predisposed towards their initiation, while others were obligatory, and still others failed to come about.

---

[11] With the suspension of national and international travel, many people's plans regarding children were halted: numerous couples and individuals were unable to travel to clinics to begin infertility treatments, and many health care structures could not guarantee the provision of voluntary abortions, or had to suspend access to reproductive medicine services.

[12] Another student told us that one of her flat mates went back to her family home in Calabria during the period when travel was prohibited. Her father drove across the country to pick her up; their desire to reunite the family was stronger than any fear of administrative or penal sanctions they might have incurred.

Undoubtedly, during the domestic confinement period, the house often appeared more cramped than ever, incapable of containing our families. We have long known that the house-family bond has been broken and no longer works (Grilli 2019). The children of divorced parents – who have two houses – may have had to give up periodic stays in one house or another, remaining with only one parent and being unable to visit the other one, or able to do so only with difficulty. A limitation for some, an opportunity for others, like, for example, the adolescent son of one of our acquaintances who voluntarily "gave up" his weekend visits to his father's house established his parents' custody agreement. The management of post-divorce parenting is always pervaded with latent conflict. Relationships (between ex-spouses, between parents and children, between grandparents and grandchildren) are maintained thanks to intensive negotiation efforts, because "nothing happens on its own" (Bourdieu 1995; Martial 2003)[13]. The house, for children of divorced parents, is always a dual proposition, and commuting is a "way of living"; for these people, domestic space is an expanded space, distributed over more than one house.

But the house is also the environment that has for some time now hosted a new sort of cohabitation between the elderly and their hired caregivers or in-home nurses. The shortage of these caregivers evidenced the lack of self-sufficiency of families no longer able to handle the task of caring for the elderly. Luminiza, a Romanian caregiver who has been in Italy since 2002, was filling in for a fellow countrywoman who had gone home for a month's vacation and found herself obliged to agree to remain with her elderly charge. From the beginning of the lockdown, she stayed shut in the house with her. The woman's family members preferred to avoid having contact with their vulnerable relative, leaving Luminiza to provide her with continuous assistance, day and night. Luminiza did not even have the standard day off each week. For her, life and work were one and the same during the period of confinement.

One of the earliest recommendations issued by the civil protection organization in early March, which discouraged grandparents from looking after their grandchildren, seemed to Italians to flout common sense and consolidated practices of solidarity, family care and the "normality of intergenerational ties." We were not surprised to see a great deal of "rhetoric" – even a series of television advertisements – to "signify" the value of physical distancing between grandparents and grandchildren underscored as a supreme form of filial responsibility towards elderly parents. Obviously, there were innumerable contraventions of the Government's recommendations, and it is hard to know with certainty how intergenerational relations were handled by the national population as a whole. Where generations live close together, as in the province of Tuscany where many extended families own or occupy adjacent apartments (Grilli 2008, 2019; Grilli, Zanotelli 2010), was there really an interruption of intergenerational relations? Certainly, newspaper and magazine columns published letters and testimonials from grandmothers and grandfathers expressing how much they missed their absent grandchildren. In some cases, this distancing was mentioned in our research as well, and was held to be an exceptional manifestation of affection and concern for the health of the elderly.

In general, directives that came in the form of presidential decrees to contain the virus expressed the weight of the impact that institutional and political decisions have on families' lives. When the news came that after April 25th people could visit their "relatives" – leaving aside the irony inspired by the use of this ambiguous and decidedly obsolete socio-juridical term –, it was an opportunity to take note of and reflect on the "boundaries" of family life and the circle of people that each of us actually considers "relatives". The initial specification that relatives are those related to us by marriage or consanguinity proved woefully inadequate in terms of representing many people's real relationships. The successive indication of parentage up to six degrees generated further disorientation, since that method of calculating parentage is not commonly known.

Not only did the definition of parentage based on "blood and law" – as David I. Schneider (1968) put it – appear incapable of comprising the range of relationships that are "truly" meaningful for individuals, but what seemed particularly inadequate was the limitation of a "genealogical view of parentage" strictly tied to a "normative" conception of the family, unfortunately often championed and strengthened by institutional and political representations. Then came a specification from the Presidency: relatives are "stable relations", apparently introducing a time criterion that seemed to

---

[13] The Italian press reported the case of a child who, at the beginning of the lockdown, was staying with his father, and remained there until his mother, who had primary custody, had a judge intervene to order his return to her.

account for relationships built through prolonged experience, only to discover that such was not the case, since boyfriend/girlfriend relationships were excluded. These awkward attempts to "regulate" relationship behaviors demonstrate an incapacity at the institutional level to perceive the fact that the dimension of choice and voluntariness has multiplied forms of family relations. The crucial point, long noted by social researchers but largely ignored by institutions, is that "the standard family module" – the monogamic, heterosexual nuclear family – no longer enjoys a position of monopoly or symbolic hegemony, although it remains statistically and juridically preeminent. In its place, we now find diverse ideas of normality, and various relational options are considered legitimate, at least in the social realm (Solinas 2014). Political decisions enacted during the pandemic have thus in many was confirmed political decision makers' reluctance to consider family relations and parentage as the outcome of processes of social and biological de-composition and re-composition that impact the relational lives of individuals and families (Grilli 2019).

The "institutional invisibility" to which certain forms of parenthood, like that of homosexual parents, have been relegated, reveals the degree to which their juridical "fragility" can weigh on the lives of parents and children. In fact, due to their being "outside the norm", homosexual parents were unable to access elementary instruments of support that were offered to "legitimate" parents and families. The "Famiglie Arcobaleno" (Rainbow Families) Association decried the difficulties of step/unofficially-adoptive parents excluded from parental leave and other benefits when not specifically recognized by a court sentence. The situation is obviously even further complicated in cases of separation of homosexual couples. Online we found the testimony of a separated lesbian mother – a step/unofficially-adoptive mother, and thus with no form of recognition from the juridical point of view – who, with no court sentence recognizing her as a step mother, nor recognition on the child's birth certificate, was not permitted to self-certify her right to travel to pick up her son, who resided with the other mother, although there was a visiting rights agreement in place.

Conclusions

In this essay we have sought to report some of the results of an ethnographic experience conducted during the domestic confinement imposed by the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. This appeared to be a period of suspension of many social norms, and thus served to highlight tensions and contradictions in the social, economic and relational life of contemporary societies. What emerged primarily was the relational dimension of our existence: we are relating beings who live in and inhabit houses, interacting with other human and non-human beings and establishing relations with technology and with a hybrid environment (Latour 1991). Autoethnography revealed how and to what degree the virus, unexpectedly thrust itself into our lives, forcing us to say "in the house," and obliged us to change our most basic and taken for granted living habits, those that define the *most human* part of our being: limiting contacts to a minimum, suspending nearly all social relations, and reconsidering how we treat our bodies, beginning with hygiene rules. But also reconsidering relations with spaces, things, products and technology. The space of the house became charged with additional values, and overloaded with functions, revealing some of the risks entailed in transforming it into a work space.

The house confirmed its status as the place where the foundational/constituting habits of our social being are developed and embodied, where relations are negotiated and gender and generational hierarchies are consolidated; true power relations are expressed within its sphere, which plastically represents the distinctive style of a family. The house appeared to be a safe place, but also a highly unsafe one, and not only due to the presence of the virus; it is no coincidence that violence against women manifested itself more markedly than ever during the period of confinement.

Both physical distancing, which forced us to rethink the rules of ordinary proxemics (Hall 1966), and habitation of the space of the house proved to be fundamental planes for fully considering the impact of a pathogenic agent on social life. It is difficult to evaluate how much this experience has changed us, or how much its impact has settled into our lives, in body practices, in spatial interactions and on the relational level, as well as with regard to how we relate to the State, health institutions, etc. From now on, social research cannot avoid continuing to examine issues that the pandemic has raised, taking into account the different impacts it has had on various components of the population depending on their socio-economic, gender and generational categories, and giving due attention to the unsustainability of

an economic and social model based on the intensive use of resources that does not recognize the centrality of sociality and the relational dimension, essential to any human life.

A further consideration is necessary in closing this essay. When we began writing this text, the pandemic situation was worsening, and we were thrust into another lockdown, the second of 2020. At the very moment when the experience of writing required us to think about these past experiences, we found ourselves once again living with confinement and its rules. The field of observation "opened up" once again, generating a disorienting sensation of disconnection, and above all of the limitations that ethnographic experience almost always inevitably entails. More time will be needed before we can apply a sufficiently detached retrospective gaze, to examine and interpret the changes Covid-19 has brought to our daily, domestic lives.

REFERENCES

AGAMBEN, Giorgio
2003   *Stato di eccezione. Homo Sacer II*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
2005   *Homo sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*. Torino: Einaudi.

AIME, Marco – FAVOLE, Adriano – REMOTTI, Francesco
2020   *Il mondo che avrete. Virus, antropocene, rivoluzione*. Milano: UTET.

ACQUISTAPACE, Alessia
2013   *Relazioni senza nome, reti di affetti, solidarietà, intimità e cura oltre la coppia eterosessuale obbligatoria.*
        https://smaschieramenti.noblogs.org/post/2013/07/15/relazioni-senza-nome/

AUGÉ, Marc
1992   *Non-Lieux*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

BASSETTI, Chiara
2020   Across Balconies. Interaction in porous home territories in the Italian lockdown. *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa* XIII (2): 233-243.

BAUSINGER, Hermann
2008   *Vicinanza estranea. La cultura popolare fra globalizzazione e Patria*. Pisa: Pacini.

BONI, Federico
2020   Frammenti di un discorso virale. Le cornici del coronavirus. *Mediascapes Journal* 15: 3-12.

BROMBERGER, Christian
2007   Toucher. *Terrain* 49: 5-10.

BOURDIEU, Pierre
1996   Des familles sans nom. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociale* 113 (1): 3-5.
2015   *La miseria del mondo*. Milano: Mimesis.
2019   *La logica della ricerca sociale. Sociologia generale*. Vol. I. Milano: Mimesis.

CAMUS, Albert
1947   *La peste*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

CAREY, Matthew
2017   *Mistrust. An Ethnographic Theory*. Chicago: Hau Books.

CHANG, Heewon
2008   *Autoethnography as Method*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

CHANG, Heewon − WAMBURA NGUNJIRI, Faith − HERNANDEZ, Kathy-Aann C.
2013   *Collaborative Autoethnography*. California: Left Coast Press INC.

COFFIN, Jean Christophe
2020   *Ipocondria collettiva e tirannia consensuale*.
        https://www.treccani.it/magazine/atlante/cultura/Storie_virali_Ipocondria_collettiva.html,
        08/05/2020

CUTOLO, Armando
2020   *Altruismo e sorveglianza nella pandemic*.
        https://www.treccani.it/magazine/atlante/cultura/Altruismo_e_sorveglianza_nella_pandemic.html,
        11/04/2020

DALLA VIGNA, Pierre
2020   *I non-luoghi del coronavirus. Il Covid-19, la filosofia e gli zombie*. Milano: Mimesis.

DE CERTEAU, Michel
2001   *L'invenzione del quotidiano*. Roma: Manifestolibri.

DE MARTINO, Ernesto
1973   *Il mondo magico. Prolegomeni a una storia del magismo*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
2020   *La fine del mondo. Contributo all'analisi delle apocalissi culturali.* Torino: Einaudi.

DOUGLAS, Mary
1991   The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space, *Social Research*. 58 (1): 288-307.
1984   *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge.

DURKHEIM, Émile
2013   *Opere*. Milano: UTET.

ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland
2017   *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change*. London: Pluto Press.

FASSIN, Didier
2017   *Punir. Une passion contemporaine*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

GIDDENS, Anthony
1990   *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

GOFFMAN, Erwing
1959   *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Garden City.

GRILLI, Simonetta
2008   'Un nuovo spirito di famiglia'. Casa, famiglia e parentela nella Toscana meridionale. In *Oltre le mura domestiche. Famiglia e legami intergenerazionali dall'Unità d'Italia a oggi*. Alessandro Rosina − Pier Paolo Viazzo (eds). Udine: Forum. Pp. 143-169.
2019   *Antropologia delle famiglie contemporanee*. Roma: Carocci.

GRILLI, Simonetta − ZANOTELLI, Francesco (eds)
2010   *Scelte di famiglia. Tendenze della parentela nella società contemporanea*. Pisa: ETS.

GUIGONI, Alessandra − FERRARI, Renato (eds)
2020   *La vita quotidiana in Italia con il Covid-19*. Danyang: M&J Publishing House.

HALL, Edward T.
1966   *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Garden City.

HINE, Christine
2015   *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London: Bloomsbury.

HERZFELD, Michael
1996   *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. London: Routledge.

HORST, Heather
2012   New Media Technologies in Everyday Life. In *Digital Anthropology*. Daniel Miller – Heather Horst (eds). London: Berg. Pp. 61-79.

FABIETTI, Ugo
2012   Errancy in Ethnography and Theory: On the Meaning and Role of 'Discovery' in Anthropological Research. In *Serendipity in Anthropological Research*. Esther Hertzog – Haim Hazan (eds). London: Routledge. Pp. 15-30.

KANEKO, Sachiko
2009   *Hikikomori and Cultural Debates about Japanese Personhood: An Anthropological Study of Japan's So-Called 'Socially-Withdrawn Youth'*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

KNOX, Hannah – NAFUS, Dawn (eds)
2018   *Ethnography for a Data-Saturated World*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

KOPYTOFF, Igor
1986   The Cultural Biography of Things. Commoditization as Process. In *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Arjun Appadurai (ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 64-94.

KOZINETS, Robert V.
2010   *Netnography. Doing Ethnography Research Online*. London: SAGE.

LATOUR, Bruno
1991   *Non siamo mai stati moderni. Saggio di antropologia simmetrica*. Bologna: Èleuthera.

LUSINI, Valentina – Pietro MELONI (eds)
2014   *Culture Domestiche. Saggi Interdisciplinari*. Firenze: Olschki.

MADIANOU, Mirca – MILLER, Daniel
2012   Polymedia: Towards a New Theory of Digital Media in Interpersonal Communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 16 (2): 169-187.

MARTIAL, Agnese
2003   *S'apparenter. Ethnologie des liens de familles recomposées*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

MAUSS, Marcel
1991   Le tecniche del corpo. In Id., *Teoria generale della magia e altri saggi*. Torino: Einaudi. Pp. 385-409.

MAZZOCCO, Davide
2019   *Cronofagia. Come il capitalismo depreda il nostro tempo*. Roma: D Editore.

MELONI, Pietro – ZANOTELLI, Francesco
2020   Contrastare l'odio. L'uso dell'antropologia nella comunicazione pubblica tra sentimenti, populismo e impegno politico. Un'introduzione. *Antropologia Pubblica* 6 (1): 21-40.

MILLER, Daniel
2001   *Home Possessions. Behind Closed Doors*. Oxford: Berg.
2010   *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rosa, Hartmut
2010   *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modernity Temporality*. Århus: Århus University Press.

Sanò, Giuliana (ed)
2020   Fare etnografia al tempo del covid-19. Continuità e fratture alla luce delle misure adottate per far fronte all'emergenza sanitaria. *Illuminazioni* 53 (9).

Schneider, David
1968   *American Kinship. A Cultural Account*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Segalen, Martyne
2002   *Riti e rituali contemporanei*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Solinas, Pier Giorgio
2014   Mille famiglie normali. *Voci. Annuale di Scienze Umane* XI: 98-113.

Taliani, Simona
2020   *Memento mori*.
        https://www.treccani.it/magazine/atlante/cultura/Storie_virali_Memento_mori.html,
        05/05/2020

Turner, Victor
1982   *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications.

Van Gennep, Arnold
1981   *I riti di passaggio*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Weiner, Annette B.
1994   Cultural Difference and Density of Objects. *American Ethnologist* 21 (2): 391 403.

Zuboff, Shoshana
2019   *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Acasă, în România.
Ongoing housing improvement in homeland

Sabrina Tosi Cambini, *University of Florence*

ABSTRACT

The text explores the interaction between home making – the social construction process of the domestic sphere – and house building – the actual building of a house, which is full of significance – based on a dense ethnographic experience with the families and their living places, in Romania and Italy.
Moving from Appadurai's perspective of the local dimension as the repertoire of the conditions of possibility, it has been possible to show that home making and house building practices reveal the conditions of 'possibility' experienced by those people and represent at the same time an action aiming for the fulfilment of 'imaginable' and 'desirable' futures.

KEYWORDS

Rudari, Romania, migration, home-making, house-building, local dimension (Appadurai).

BIO

She is habilitated for Associate Professorship in Social and Cultural Anthropology from 2013 and currently she teaches Cultural Anthropology at the University of Firenze. She previously worked (2005-2014) for the Giovanni Michelucci Foundation in charge of the Observatory on the housing situation of Roma and Sinti in Tuscany, of the Observatory on informal housing, and responsible of the Intercultural studies sector. She is board member of the Italian Society of Applied Anthropology (SIAA), and member of the Scientific Committee of its Journal. She coordinates national and international working groups, and she is researcher associate at the Centre for Governmentality and Disability Studies Robert Castel (University of Naples Sant'Orsola Benincasa). Her research interests are in the field of urban anthropology, migration and mobility, and – more recently – on connections between anthropology and performing arts.

sabrina.tosicambini@unifi.it

Introduction: future and home

The article focuses on the practices and the meanings related to the house-building and home-making processes in Romania by a Romanian *Rudari Lingurari* network of families, mutually connected through ties of kindred, coming from some villages in the South of Romania and who migrated mostly to Italy, but also to Spain, Great Britain and France[1].

During my multi-site research[2], started in 2008[3], I tried to hold together the two dimensions of space and time, connecting the transnational[4] perspective and mobility[5] paradigm to the past, present and future of the life of these families. In this connection, the emphasis is on how the local dimension – both in Italy and in Romania – intervenes in the process of construction of new ways of thinking that affect the lives of the migrants, what they consider important and how to implement the possibilities opened by migration, considering constraints, imagination and aspiration, how and where they feel at home.

My long-term research reveals the centrality of the international network determined by patterns correlated to the extended family and affinity kinship. In the immigration countries, the relationships network – extended in space – provides actors with a basic understanding and knowledge of new contexts and scenarios of migration. It also allows the enhancement of a process of anticipation and the projection into a relatively near future of life expectations. Marriage practices and the family relationships appear as important resources to cope with changing circumstances and a new local dimension.

A future-oriented approach, induced me to identify the key elements that the family's network provides; and the desires and practices induced by kinship cultural patterns, notably referred to the *homing* process (thinking, feeling and making a home, see Boccagni 2017).

Moving from these emic and cultural factors to the political and macro-structural factors - and their interaction – I analyse what intervenes in the process of conceiving 'thinkable' and 'desirable' futures, and the concrete possibilities of realising them[6]. The issue of the local dimension suggested by Appadurai (2013) as the repertoire of the conditions of the possibilities, starting from how individuals and groups do experience about themselves and shape their own future[7].

---

[1] See: Marcetti *et alii* 2011; Marcetti and Tosi Cambini 2013; Tosi Cambini 2010, 2016a, 2016b, forthcoming 2021.

[2] In the twelve or so years of research I 'followed' the migrant families in this family network, in the villages in Romania, in Great Britain and with relatives in Bulgaria, as well as in Italy.

[3] The research began in 2008 thanks to the Giovanni Michelucci Foundation, for which I was a researcher and head of the Observatory on precarious living in Tuscany and of the Observatory on Roma and Sinti settlements until 2014. In 2015 I was a research fellow in the MigRom project – *The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: causes, effects, and future engagement strategies*, http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/. From 2016 to the present day (December 2020) the relationships with many of the families have continued and they have allowed me to follow from within or closely their stories in Italy and Romania. In this article, as already in the publications cited in the previous note, I bring together the knowledge that emerged during the various research periods, in a perspective that reconstructs the changes that have affected the history of these families before and during migration. For reasons of research ethics, people's names have been changed, making them difficult to recognise. In this sense, fictitious names are also used for the countries of origin. As regards the pictures in the article: the first four were taken in the course of research for the Michelucci Foundation; the others are part of the ethnographic work carried out in various periods in Romania.The latter, apart from those that also portray me, were produced as fieldwork 'documents'. The photographs in which I appear are the result of an ethnographic 'situation' in which people wanted to take photos using my camera or theirs, becoming part of a communications circuit separate from the research itself.

[4] "If the adjective 'transnational' does have any specific meaning in referring to migrants, I suggest that it should lie in problematising the 'attachment' to places of origin among deterritorialised persons who are not only denied full membership of the 'society' in which they mainly live and work but even a full personhood" (Gledhill 1998: 4, cit. in Grillo 2000: 6).

[5] See among others: Sheller and Urry 2006; Favell 2015; Riccio 2019.

[6] «Anthropologists need to engage in a "systematic effort to understand how cultural systems, as combinations of norms, dispositions, practices, and histories, frame the good life as a landscape of discernible ends and of practical paths to the achievement of these ends. This requires a move away from the anthropological emphasis on cultures as logics of reproduction to a fuller picture in which cultural systems also shape specific images of the good life as a map of the journey from here to there and from now to then, as a part of the ethics of everyday life" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 292). This effort will evidence the difference between what Appadurai calls 'the ethics of possibility' and 'the ethics of probability'. The former is based on "those ways of thinking, feeling and acting that increase the horizon of hope, that expand the field of the imagination, that produce greater equity in what [he has] the capacity to aspire, and that widen the field of informed, creative, and critical citizenship". Conversely, the ethics of probability deal with "those ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that flow out of what Ian Hacking called 'the avalanche of numbers'… they are generally tied to the growth of a casino capitalism which profits from catastrophe and tends to bet on disaster" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 295); (Poli 2014: 28).

[7] "The capacity to aspire is unequally distributed" and "its skewed distribution is a fundamental feature, and not just a secondary attribute, of extreme poverty" (Appadurai 2013: 289).

By connecting the families' network, the cultural familiar pattern and the local dimensions in Italy and in Romania, I tried to understand how the families I'm talking about can shape their home and future, in their double life context. This *future-'homing'-oriented* analysis can give a deep comprehension of the migration experiences, and also to identify the shifts in meaning linked to the process of homing between the first generation that migrated and their sons and daughters who grew up in the country of immigration.

This last aspect is important since here we will in fact refer to a generation of people who have already begun to migrate as women and men (albeit young), who have therefore not grown up in the new migratory context, whose perspective of 'future' and 'home' looks very different (see Tosi Cambini *forthcoming* 2021).

Within this *future-'homing'-oriented* approach, which impacts a significant number of issues within life contexts, the article will focus on the process of building one's home in Romania, not before dwelling on some elements of the housing situation in Italy, precisely because of the connection between the two contexts in bringing out or not the feeling of 'being at home' and the desires that arise from it: a real vision of the house materially and – we would say – 'strongly understood' (its external and internal form, the place and methods of construction, the necessary resources, etc.).

Hints on migration and the condition of precarious living in Italy

The *Rudari* families' network I'm referring to is centred on the families' area of origin in the South of Romania and, in particular, in some villages in Costanţa County (*Judeţul*), Dobruja Region, and Călăraşi County (*Judeţul*), Muntenia Region. They are traditionally associated with mobile lifestyles, historically tied up to woodworking which was interrupted with the advent of Communism and policies of forced settlement[8]. This, however, changed in the '90s when the *Rudari* again began to move internationally due to their economic precariousness. Work was irregular in agriculture and construction sectors, with salaries below € 10 a day. The only alternative was to work as drivers for the tinker Roma in the village and abroad. Without regular work, the *Rudari* in their homeland were also excluded from access to the national health system. Leaving became the only concrete and feasible option. Youths started to leave in search of seasonal jobs. Mothers and girls could also engage in short term travel to substitute relatives in domestic work. Married men engaged in longer work periods. A single member or a nucleus of the family could more or less permanently leave for various countries of greater Europe: Italy, Spain, England, Germany, France, Greece and also Turkey. This process created transnational family webs, giving rise to a 'reticular migration' in which relatives abroad act both as a vehicle for work opportunities and a safety net for the new arrivals.

It is acknowledged that people engaging in migration within Europe do not take just one voyage, but many more or less frequent ones, which allow them to live in the reality of their homeland as well, making it possible for them to juggle social, economic and spatial relationships in two places at the same time. This form of migration gives individuals and family groups the opportunity to continually renegotiate their existence in the countries of their departure as well as in their country of arrival according to their individual possibilities. Contingent situations influence decisions.

As mentioned, I have studied the *Rudari* 'community' which arrived in Florence. For many of them, the mode of settlement took the form of squatting. Their first squatting occurred in 2006 and it is called by them 'la Luzzi'[9] from the name of the public hospital that was hosted on the premises until 1998. This experience was an important 'life-passage' for many people, as it gave them the possibility to achieve a certain degree of residential stability in the migration, compared with the previously homeless or little slum situation experienced by the first men who arrived. Thanks to 'la Luzzi', new possibilities have opened up: family members arriving, schooling for the children, job-seeking, health caring. Life in the receiving country is an uphill experience, but with some advantages. Communications with the community in the country of origin were (and continues to be) intense with a constant exchange of information, things and people between the two places: Romania was (and is even now) still considered 'home'.

---

[8] See next paragraph.
[9] Please refer to the texts cited in note 1.

'La Luzzi' also served to provide protection and support. Its inhabitants had to face changes in social and cultural contexts, similarities or deep differences compared with the place of provenance. The ties of solidarity within families and the relative ease of reception into a new place have given many families the possibility to attempt different strategies 'in their movement' between Romania and Italy, to gradually confront the new realities of immigration by trying out various opportunities of life between these two contexts, and sometimes to attempt a new life plan in Italy without jeopardising everything in the country of origin. Self-management has provided them with opportunities for action, but their capability has been reduced by the description of them given by media and institutions: they have been falsely represented as being committed to illegal activities, squalor, muddle and uncivilised behaviour. The safety net within the 'la Luzzi' has kept alive some of the fundamental characteristics of family networks: economic unity, living together and solidarity.

FIGURES 1-2: 'La Luzzi': some abandoned areas and buildings in the complex that have become family homes

With the support of the *Movimento di Lotta per la Casa* (a Social Movement in Florence) the alternative proposal to squatting in 'la Luzzi' was not only occupying an abandoned property to inhabit as much as an opportunity both for the city and for the immigrants: for the squatters to acquire access to decent housing and for Florence to develop the potentialities of the Luzzi as a socially useful structure. The

request to start a negotiation with the local institution was started also against the envisaged privatisation of the area (park and buildings), transforming the place into a five-star hotel or a luxury housing complex.

In this way, the aspiration of these immigrant people combines with the broader issue of the government of the city and with what Henry Lefebvre called "the right to the city". In the anticipation prospective, we could say that the future of the families and the future of the city encounter each other at a crucial point: the housing issues.

FIGURES 3-4: 'La Luzzi': some abandoned areas and buildings in the complex that have become family homes

With the end of the occupation of 'La Luzzi', over the years families have found other and, with time, changing solutions, with returns to Romania, transfers to other occupations, rentals of houses with several families. Some – but few – have followed institutional paths linked to shelters, others to emergency housing and – the luckiest, at the moment we only know two – have become assignees of a public housing apartment.

For 'our' families, the precariousness of the housing conditions in Florence[10] reinforces the intensity of the context of origin in giving meaning to their life choices and the renegotiation of a physical and social space *acasă în România*.

In Romania

The population of the villages of 'our' families, as often happens in Romania, is spatially divided and there is a distinction between Romanians, Roma (*țigani rromi*) and Rudari (*țigani rudari*).

Valeriu[11], a relative of the family that is the 'protagonist' of the following paragraphs, tells me that during the Second World War they went to the municipalities of Cernavodă and others nearby where there were waterways, especially the Danube and its ramifications, near the woods and asked the *pădurar* (the 'guardian' of the wood) for permission to fell the trees. They worked with wood, manufacturing spoons (*lingure* 'spoon', hence the name of *rudari lingurari*) and other kitchen utensils, and then during the summer they would go to various towns to sell them or barter them with other objects, mainly foods such as flour and cheese, which they would eat during the winter. They also worked with the *boeri* (the owners of buildings and land) both in the houses and in the fields. "The Rudari", explains Valeriu, "used to go around Dobroudja, in particular to Călărași[12] and Tulcea, always near the Danube, with their cart. They stop in the places according to the duration of the contract for use of the forest that the *pădurar* grants them. They move with their cart and oxen".

FIGURE 5: Geographical area of provenance

From the end of 1950s – with the progressive state control measures, forced sedentarisation and the collectivisation process – they gradually began to work at the Sibu Mare Agricultural Cooperative, where they also slept overnight. They were paid from Monday to Friday, while – continues Valeriu – the work on Saturday and Sunday was paid for with flour and other food products.

When Valeriu's grandfather's brother calls Luminiţa (Valeriu's mother) to Sibu Mare, she is pregnant with him (it is 1966): "My parents are in Brăila and therefore they have to cross the river with the cart on the boat and Luminiţa was afraid of falling into the water and losing her baby, which is me". Ion, Valeriu's grandfather, bought 2000 square metres of land and they settled permanently in Sibu Mare.

---

[10] In this sense, it should be emphasised that they have not been identified in public discourse, by the media and by institutions as 'gypsies' and, therefore, have had the opportunity to actively escape the mechanisms of the 'policies for the Roma'. On this point, please refer to the texts cited in note 1 and, further on, in paragraph 3.
[11] Sibu Mare, Romania, October 2010.
[12] Călărași is in Muntenia Region.

Despite the difficulties experienced, the period of work in the CAPs[13] is remembered as a 'safe' time, in the sense that some elements of social protection were guaranteed, which in the post-socialist period failed completely[14].

FIGURE 6*:* The map of Sibu Mare village at the time when Valeriu's grandfather settled there and built the house, designed by 'uncle' Valeriu for me in October 2010.

On the map, Valeriu inserts the *Camin [cultural]* to provide me with spatial references of the present, in order to orient myself. Where the inscription *islaz* appears, on the outskirts of the town – Valeriu explains to me – the first Rudari lived there and subsequently the poorest ones remained, with mainly small houses, dry-built with *adobe* (mud brick), and even in 2010 it continued to be so. Although a few were better cared for, most of the houses showed severe structural and maintenance deficiencies. Valeriu adds that when the Rudari came to Sibu Mare, including his grandparents, before settling permanently, though he was not yet born, they stopped in the *islaz* (fig. 7). The Rudari then began to buy the land and build better houses than the first ones, but always with adobe and less important than those of the Romanians, in the other area of the country corresponding to the inscription *case vechi* (e.g. fig. 8).

While the area beyond the river and the main road – where, in the drawing, I noted 'the '90s' – is that of the third 'expansion' of the Rudari, where there are the houses of the sons of Luminiţa, i.e. of Valeriu himself, Ionica and Alexandru built starting from those years, some from scratch, others enlarged with new rooms, thanks to the first remittances coming from the work abroad.

These elements of socio-spatial configuration are important to understand today the different aspects that contribute to configuring the construction of the house – in the double sense of house-building and home-making – as one of the central factors in migratory processes.

---

[13] *Cooperativa Agricolă de Producţie*, 'Agricultural Production Cooperatives'.
[14] Also Teodorescu reports: "[…] the Rudari of Valea lui Stan, who in the state-socialist era were active in the collective farms […]. This lifestyle was remembered by some older Rudari interviewees as prosperous and secure. Not secure from farm relocations, but secure in that everyone was forced into employment and therefore not 'dying of hunger like nowadays in democracy' […]" (2020: 103).

FIGURE 7: Islaz, 2010.

FIGURE 8: A big 'old' Rudari house

To understand better, it is necessary to mention some issues around the 'categorisation' of Rudari groups. Their origin is still debated among the few scholars who have dealt with them over time. The fascination that the question has in our eyes lies in the category of identity (as critically deconstructed) but, in reality, it appears to be a problem that worries scholars more than the Rudari themselves. Above all, in my opinion, by reducing the question to whether or not they are Roma, a fuzzy logic is lost in approaching the processes of ethnicisation and those of emic and ethical identity 'collocation' in a given social and historical context. It is precisely the question of borders that intrigues me most because 'our' Rudari with their history linked to itinerant crafts and their current biographies demonstrate not only the arbitrariness of the borders themselves, but also that of being a group that does not know what to do with them. In short, we could say, they crossed them and continue to cross them because they don't need them (at least not these etic and spatial borders).

In the popular Gypsy/non-Gypsy dichotomy, non-Gypsies place them among the Gypsies, but they define themselves as non-Gypsies. 'Our' Rudari say they are not gypsies or they just say "they call us gypsies", shrugging their shoulders and turning their heads a little, thus underlining that this word has a meaning that does not belong to them and does not concern them, if not in their relationship with the "Romanian Romanians"[15].

In the popular Roma/non-Roma dichotomy, the Roma place them among the non-Roma and this time they agree, not considering themselves Roma.

In this sense, Valeriu explains to me[16] that the rromi call them *caştali* (i.e. 'wood workers' in a derogatory sense), and that the "Romanians Romanians" call them *ţigani*: "Even the 'Romanians Romanians' work as drivers for the rromi, so" – says Valeriu – "there are beautiful Romanians who speak *ţiganeşte* [romanes] and then they call us '*ţigani*', even if we don't speak the *ţiganeşte* language".

This situation has greatly intrigued the intellectual culture, and there is no doubt that scholars speak of it when they speak of gypsies, but then with many 'distinctions': *ţigani* but always a little 'special', 'others', 'different' (Bengelstorf 2009; Block 1936; Chelcea 1944a; Calotă 1974, 1995; Guţă 2009; Stahl 1991). And it is certain that, incorporated among the Gypsies in popular cosmologies and having entered the Gypsy imagination, they find it hard to get out of it. Moreover, with the use for some years of the word 'Roma' in substitution for 'Gypsies' (almost always inflated by discriminatory meanings in the various European languages), they are struggling to get out of their identification as 'Roma' in disciplinary studies[17]: although, among the scholars, there is also the theory that they are Romanians (Nicolăescu-Plopşor 1922, Cherata 2015) or a separate group of unknown origin (Chelcea 1943, 1944b), most researchers essentially believe that they are Roma (see Sorescu-Marinković 2018).

What is certain is that it is a set of networks of people with blurred borders that historically occupy a region also with blurred borders. Three things are certain: 1) they speak Romanian as their first language, a Romanian that linguists define as archaic and which they trace back to dialects spoken in south western Transylvania in the 15th-16th century (Calotă 1974, 1995); 2) they are traditionally wood workers, and their techniques have been studied in detail in the past by Martin Block (Block 1991 [1923]) and nowadays as a singular contribution to Romanian intangible cultural heritage (Sorescu-Marinković 2018); 3) they traditionally lived in local groups made up of a few dozen families and located near peasant villages and, at the same time, near woods and forests, in *bordeie*, that is huts or underground houses[18].

Their narrative of their own group identity underlines an extreme distance from the Roma: in a contrastive way, they claim to speak Romanian, to be or have been wood workers and that during communism they worked in the CAPs, and that they have their own customs and traditions, different from the Roma. Similarly, various of the nineteenth and twentieth century sources emphasise the fact that they are considered honest and good people, not antisocial like the Roma; in short, they are considered 'strange gypsies' with whom one usually gets along, even if there may be disputes about the

---

[15] If they use the term 'gypsy', it is especially young people who do so and it is to make fun of someone among themselves by calling him so, in order to emphasise an aspect that has to do with the external stereotype of a way of doing or a physical appearance attributed to gypsies.

[16] Sibu Mare, Romania, October 2010.

[17] For questions concerning the adoption of the 'official' Roma terminology, please refer to Tosi Cambini and Beluschi Fabeni 2017, with related bibliographic references.

[18] Although *bordei* is the name given to the underground house, the term is commonly used in many regions of Romania also to indicate very poor houses, such as the hut (*colibă*). For the underground dwelling in the eastern Danube region see Stahl 1972.

rights of way in the village and the exploitation of the woods[19]. With the Rudari, who could and can cover many types of work related to wood (from lumberjacks to charcoal burners to craftsmen with a thousand tools for the house or for agricultural work), we have the example of integration in a geographical area characterised by the presence of vast forests, which historically favoured the development of a real 'wood culture', in which everything, the houses of the poor, the palaces of the rich and the churches, could be wooden constructions, and in which there is a rich cosmology related to the tree (Bouras 2018).

The Rudari, therefore, in the last five centuries have spread around the Balkans in search of wood to work and woods from which to obtain it. And sometimes practicing other 'gypsy' jobs, especially that of animal exhibitors. Often occupying the same economic niche as the Roma, they have often had similar destinies, including deportations.

Considering the endogamy of which all the authors speak, but of which we still have few quantitative data[20], they constitute the typical case, also usual in other Eurasian contexts, in which the boundary between 'occupational group' and 'ethnic group' disappears (Piasere 1995; Maruschiakova and Popov 2013, Constantin 2016). The fact is that the Rudari we are talking about here underline precisely this type of cohesion, deriving their name from the Romanian *rudă*, 'relative', and therefore thinking of themselves as a group of relatives, or as local groups of relatives, not as an ethnic or cultural group or the like. Therefore, despite the dissolubility of the ethnic categories endogamy appears to be key in the social organisation of the Rudari.

With the Roma, on the other hand, they continue to share some interests and destinies even today. Since the policy of ethnic recognition in the Balkans has been over-valued and considered a fundamental tool of redemption, there has been an alliance of Rudari with the Roma, who gather in the same political parties (Şerban 2007; Tosi Cambini *forthcoming* 2021), or who jointly present their own claims. For the Rudari, therefore, sometimes the possibility arises of fluctuating between different categorisations: certainly considered *ţigani* in Romania, in their own land they can choose whether to weave a conjunctural alliance with the Roma or not; while in foreign emigration countries, depending on the migratory 'channels' which they manage to enter, they can instead declare themselves 'only' Romanians. Although the latter are, in any case, the subject of discriminatory discourses and practices, there is no doubt that the possibility of not being associated with the Roma opens up greater opportunities for them to settle and work[21].

This position 'between the borders' is also reflected in the spatial position occupied in the villages, between the 'Romanian Romanians' and the 'Rromi', but with the latter undoubtedly united by an unequal treatment (neither at the level of civil society nor at the institutional level) by the Romanians (even racist treatment) and by a housing situation which − with the cessation of itinerant crafts and the beginning of sedentarisation − placed their homes in an unequal comparison with the homes of the Romanian peasants.

Now, with remittances − which in the history of migration, it is known, have always played an important role not only for people but also for the development of their countries of origin − the houses of many Rudari have gradually taken on forms of construction that have increasingly begun to have characteristics defined by (all) the inhabitants as 'modern', considered in that context not only as better than the previous Rudari houses, but also than Romanians' peasant houses. As in cases of other groups with which, as we said above, they share a treatment of marginalisation by the majority population, even for the Rudari their homes are considered a sign of 'civilisation' (see Tesăr 2016, Toma, Tesăr and Fosztó 2017). Ionica says: "we are modernised, we have cars, and we have beautiful houses".

---

[19] This is not the only case in Europe where wood workers are considered 'gypsies', although there is no social friction with them: that of the *agotes* of the Basque Country in modern times, economically useful and integrated even if considered unclean, known as *cascarots* in the French part, is another example (Antolini 1989). Thanks to Leonardo Piasere for sharing with me this information.

[20] See Tosi Cambini *forthcoming* 2021.

[21] Similarly, Slavkova reports the same thing about the Rudari of Bulgarian nationality, who in Spain and Greece claim to be Bulgarian and have nothing to do with the "Romanian Gypsies, whom the Rudari percive as beggars and nomads, and with whom they do not want to deal" (2017: 62). Another case, rare at the moment in the literature, is that reported by Teodorescu in Uppsala (Sweden) where the Rudari from the province of Vâlcea in Romania practice alms-giving.

This 'modernisation' takes shape, materialises and becomes visible in their country of origin both for other Rudari and for 'Romanian Romanians'. Compared with the latter, this has made it possible to open a continuous process of socio-spatial 'renegotiation', with multiple nuances and discrepancies, which – in particular with respect to the theme we are discussing – can be read in the configuration of the new portion of the village parcelled out by the Municipality, where new houses have been built by both Rudari and 'Romanian Romanians' (Fig. 8 and 9).

FIGURE 9: Panorama of the new part of Sibu Mare

With respect to the internal equilibrium of 'our' Rudari, mutual views and positioning emerge among the 'localised groups' based on acquired lifestyles and assets.

Speaking one evening in the garden of his house in Romania, with Mihai, uncle Valeriu and his neighbour Stefan, the latter asserts that "the Rudari of Sibu Mare are the ones who are better off", "you see" – he continues, turning to me – "we have more beautiful houses, cars… this is because we started to emigrate earlier, we went all over Europe, to Italy, Germany, France, England". Then he looks at Mihai, remembering that he is from Vadrea and tells him: "I'm sorry, eh, but that's it, don't you think?". Mihai initially hesitant, replies "Yes, but here you have the *țigani* [*pletoși, călderări*], eh, that also counted, you can't say that it didn't". Stefan can only confirm. So I ask him: "But in your opinion, Stefan, is it also because Communism took place here, the Rudari from here, from Sibu Mare, worked more in the CAPs than the others in Vadrea, Sibust…?" "Well, that can be so", he replies, but it does not seem to be a topic that convinces him, as he shows little interest in it.

Stefan returns to migration and the improvement of the material conditions that it has made possible: "Have you seen how they are doing in Badra?" Along the same lines are the telephone messages that Constantine, while visiting his wife's parents in Badra, sends to his cousin Dana, when he is in Vadrea.

The competition that emerges between people from different places is rarely made explicit between them, i.e. intergroup (Stefan forgets for a moment that Mihai is from Vadrea), while it is more likely that it is intra-group, as in the case of the aforementioned cousins. On both occasions, the game of competition also passes through the search for a common understanding, in the tones of irony, as in messages such as: "Help… there are mice here! I can't wait to go home [to Sibu Mare], believe me".

To interpret it adequately, this competition must be correlated with the kinship structure of these groups, among whom there is a marriage alliance, which the reconstruction of the genealogy made by me can document as existing already for at least a century. They are spatially localised groups, whose territorial location is the result of the intertwining of internal and external factors: of the residence model of the new couple based on viri-patrilocality; of the circulation, within parental networks, of information on work-economic opportunities (element of continuity in the social organisation of the Rudari who we know, from the times when they went to *baltă*[22] up to the new emigration contexts) and from the

---

[22] Marshy area in the woods, where they lived part of the year when they were still working as *lingurari*.

historical-political dynamics (the very complicated ones of *Cadrilater[23]* – in which they lived –, those subsequent to the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the communist regime, and those related to the sedentarisation policies).

So these groups correspond to genealogical 'clusters' placed spatially, among whom there is, it was said, a marriage alliance, possible thanks also to the absence of differences in power levels and therefore of a formal political hierarchy between these groups, as well as between families.

"In this anti-hierarchical society, internally fragmented but at the same time interrelated and densely intricate" (ni Shuinéar 2005: 343), in our case, every adult person, both man and woman, can say 'something good' about their family or network of families, which brings with it, in turn, an affirmation of (temporary) superiority.

FIGURE 10: Road in the new part of Sibu Mare, 2015

[23] An important part of these families' micro-history can in fact be found in the macro-history of the dispute between Romania and Bulgaria in Southern Dobruja and in particular in the events following the Treaty of Craiova signed on 7 September 1940.

FIGURE 11: Road with Rudari houses in Vadrea, 2015

Now, in 'that something good', there are references to multiple areas of life, for example, the behaviour of one's children, but above all – returning to migration – the skill demonstrated in achieving the objectives of economic improvement that have allowed the purchase of vehicles, the investment of remittances in activities such as the opening of a shop or the purchase of a van to begin the local transport of goods or the international transport of goods and people, and – above all – the building of a new home: "And what did we leave for, then!", exclaims Dana.

What in the literature is defined as migratory 'success' is therefore replayed in the context of origin both internally and externally, making the social and spatial arrangements fluctuate towards new balances, where the house seems to be the cornerstone.

How to build a house 1: a family matter (production and reproduction of relationships)

We will now tell how was built, from August 2015 to the last summer, the home of Mihai and Dana, who 'eloped'[24] together in 2009 while they were in Florence.

The union between these third-degree cousins, one from Vadrea, the other from Sibu Mare, with three children, Dorina eight years old, Marco, born in 2014 and Rachele almost one year old, was eventually accepted by the respective families. This union followed the practice (in its many variants) of this wide Rudari network: the frequently occurring elopement and the following 'pardon' (in one of the possibilities), the alliance between groups of families within well-defined territorial spaces, or – in other words – the tendency to maintain the unity of genealogical space through endogamous marriages between relatively distanced kin.

[24] Elopement, as a 'form' of marriage, is widespread among the Rudari.

There is, however, an element that slowly emerges in the story of the couple, after the birth of the children, of the new family. It is the tendency to not respect virilocality, which is completely set aside with the decision to build their home in the village of the bride.

Let's see the temporal succession, in 2015, of the phases that led to the beginning of the construction works and how the man's family compensated for this will, from a symbolic-cultural point of view, in order to avoid a fracture between the families involved and allow the new nucleus to build a house: the last act which materially sanctions the completeness of adulthood and the of the family.

The land was finally bought from a person acquainted with the town, who was also a Rudaro. It is located in the new part of Sibu Mare, the fourth Rudari 'expansion' in the territory of the town, this time – as we said – space for new homes also for Romanians. It is located near the house under construction belonging to Dana's brother, her cousins' house – at the time, almost finished – and that of a couple of uncles.

Already in the spaces and times of migration to Italy, since the couple went to live together and, therefore, with the consequent collective recognition of their union, Mihai is – we could say – incorporated into his wife's family, an aspect that was the source of strong disagreements that have lasted for years between the latter and her mother-in-law, and that only in the last two years seem to have subsided a little. In fact, with the passage of time and especially the birth of the grandchildren, the mother-in-law gradually gave in, also after having talked repeatedly with Dana's mother.

An important role for the family approval for the construction of the house, in 2015, was also played by Liviu, Mihai's elder brother, who also emigrated to Florence with his family and who also ended up accepting Dana's choice of country:

Sabrina   What did Liviu say to Mihai?
Dana   He said he's sorry they're not close, but if we have made up our minds, that's fine
           with him.

This passage represents the final approval by Mihai's family, certainly not with enthusiasm, which in fact made it possible to complete the purchase of the land and for the decision to start work on the house. The works will be done in the way they always are, that is, as we will see shortly, through the activation of the close parental network of both spouses.

The plot measures 500 square metres and 2,000 Euros have been paid for it. The deed will be registered with the Municipality in a subsequent period in order not to spend on bureaucracy the resources needed for its implementation.

While Dana, in July 2015, tells me all this, we are still in Vadrea, in the home of Mihai's parents. Indeed, to compensate for the imbalance due to the breach of the principle of virilocality, the following steps have been undertaken in Vadrea: the making of "documents" of the union of Mihai and Dana (what externally would be perceived as the wedding in the municipality), the following *grătar* at home with kin and the closest 'brothers and sisters in Christ' (the *masă*, the table, is placed), and the (Pentecostal) baptism of little Marco on the evening of the following day.

"Sabri" – tells me Dana – "we left in a rush, with not even the time to prepare our luggage: Mihai's mother with his [older] brother arrived in Sibu Mare and we had to leave immediately… I have nothing to wear to go to the municipality. Mihai's mother wants me to buy a dress, but I have no money, and at home I have plenty of clothes!".

Once order is re-established through the different above-mentioned passages, one can start to speak about how the home should look: which shape (not the purely external one, it is indeed a 'vision of the home'), how many floors, how many bedrooms.

In this sense, Mihai – like the other men who I have had the opportunity to hear on the subject – indulge the woman's wishes especially with respect to the location of the kitchen and other features (for example the built-in wardrobes in the bedroom), often absent or transformed compared to the traditional Rudari houses. Although this aspect is connected to the close relationship between the domestic space and the activities/skills related to gender, it has in itself novelties coming from the work activities of women in Italian homes, which men have less to do with. The homes of Italians, in fact, represent one of the main models of inspiration in imagining the interiors and from which objects and furniture often come. With an original mix between this model, a little bit of *kitsch* and the *rudari domisticité*, the walls are coloured, the windows enriched with chiffon curtains of various colours, the kitchen is equipped with all

the household appliances, but then often the bed is added to it, a living room is set up with sofas, knick-knacks and decorative objects, where initially we tend not to let the children go and use only for guests, but then it is invaded by the TV, bags and anything else that comes from Italy, all while waiting to be placed elsewhere (in the house itself or, more often, in that of relatives).

FIGURE 12: Interior of a new house, bedroom, wardrobe with clothes that have come from Italy.

FIGURE 13: Interior of a new house, to be completed, with objects and household appliances that have come from Italy-

In Vadrea, using the wifi network of a shop, Mihai and I connect with my computer (their tablet, bought in Italy, in the hurry of the departure, was forgotten in Sibu Mare) and we browse a Romanian site where they sell projects to build houses. Obviously, it is not Mihai's intention to buy one, but only to take inspiration from the pictures of the houses and the measurements of the areas indicated, also to get an idea of how much building material is needed and how much it may cost.

We see one house in particular, with one floor, which has the entrance as Dana would like it – so Mihai tells me – and also the kitchen and living room spaces. Even the bedrooms, three in number, correspond to their wishes, while the bathrooms – which in the image are two – will be reduced to one, which to them is obvious. Happy with the choice, we save the web page and, a little later, in the evening, Mihai shows it to his parents, who like it.

FIGURE 14: Interior of a new house: living room with various objects and furniture from Italy, some of which destined for relatives' houses.

FIGURE 15: Interior of an old house modernised thanks to the first remittances.

FIGURE 16: Traditional stove in the new house. The emigrant woman's mother is seated beside it on a low stool, a traditionally used type of seat.

Now we can leave and return to Sibu Mare: Dana's mother-in-law, who had insisted on coming too, will not be able to do so because her eldest daughter, in Florence, has found her a job for two months, so in a few days' time she will have to join her[25].

It is possible to retrace the stages of those busy days in July 2015 spent in Vadrea:

Wednesday 22: recognition of paternity, by Mihai, of the two children (who will now bear their father's surname and no longer that of their mother), in a notary's office for the public administration, in the city near Vadrea, Peteşi.

Saturday 25, morning: marriage 'documents' in the Municipality to which the town of Vadrea belongs. From here on, Dana will also bear Mihai's surname, which completely replaces her own.

Saturday 25, evening: the *grătar* is held.

Sunday 26, evening: baptism of Mihai's son, Marco and of his little cousin, son of his elder brother, Liviu. To celebrate the baptism, the arrival of Mihai's mother's brother from England was expected. The ceremony is held during the *adunare* (the Pentecostal meeting), next to the home of Mihai's parents, since it was they, about fifteen years earlier, who gave the land for the construction of the 'church'.

On Monday 27 we are therefore ready to return to Sibu Mare and after a few days, on August 3, construction of the house begins.

---

[25] Leaving by bus, which in such a short space of time, costs much less than the plane, does not require a reservation and, giving the possibility of making any changes in departure dates, allows for much more luggage to be carried.

How to build a house 2: a family building site

In the week between the return and the start of the actual work, Mihai draws the floor plan of the house in a notebook, and discusses it with a *Rudari* peer of his age from Sibu Mare who works as a bricklayer and is involved in the early stages of the work.

In the evening, this guy joins us at Dana's family home. The men talk about measurements, the material needed, how to spend as little as possible; we women serve them but we also listen, we look after the children and then, when the conversation lightens, we too are involved. Unlike the others, I remain silent and listen, so every now and then they make fun of me, especially Mihai and uncle Valeriu, who has seen me go to their house for years: "Don't you have anything to say? Are you dumb?". But everyone is happy with my progress in the language and it is an aspect that is greatly appreciated.
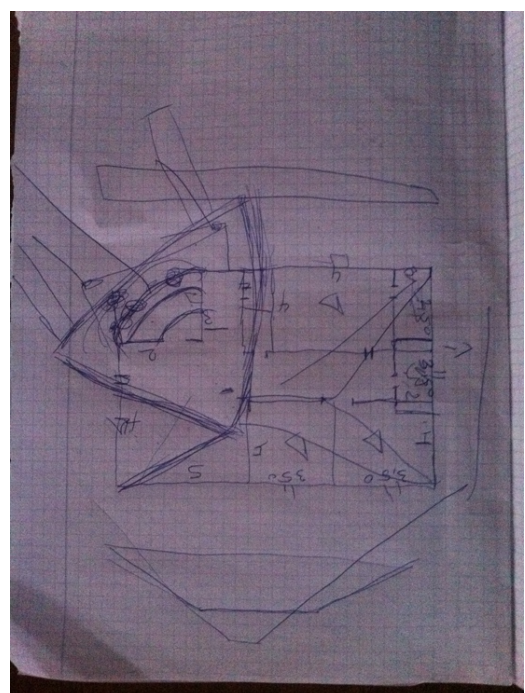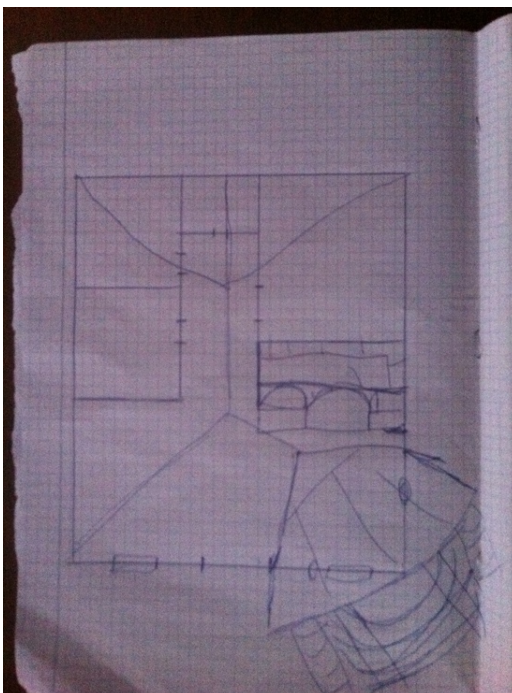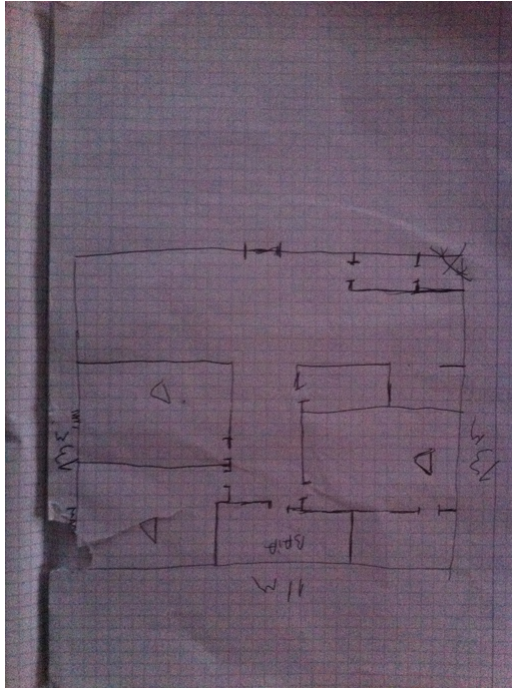
FIGURES 17- 20: Plans of the house designed by Mihai (the last one with some modifications made by bricklayer)

The picture just outlined is an example of how the whole process of building the house is incorporated into the genealogical space from the beginning, and also inherent in the filiation, as it is linked to the fact of the formation of the new family nucleus, a segment that detaches from the parents' home, but remains close to it (although in this exceptional, but not unique case, the close housing proximity is recreated in the wife's parental network).

The close scanning of the times makes it clear that, when the conditions are met for the fulfilment of something that is expected to happen in any case (whether it is in the near future – for example, a departure – or in a less definable time), you do it immediately. Especially when this fulfilment is linked to economic resources: as they exist, they must be used immediately.

Finally, the technical aspects of the construction of the house are also dealt with in the same context of family relationships: the only person who is not in the parental network, the bricklayer from Sibu Mare, however is a Rudar and has been known for many years, and is invited home, in the evening, when the family reunites.

The bureaucratic aspects – the registration of the joint project and the planning permission – can wait (they are expensive and take away resources that must be used for the purchase of building materials), but will still be done before departure for Italy.
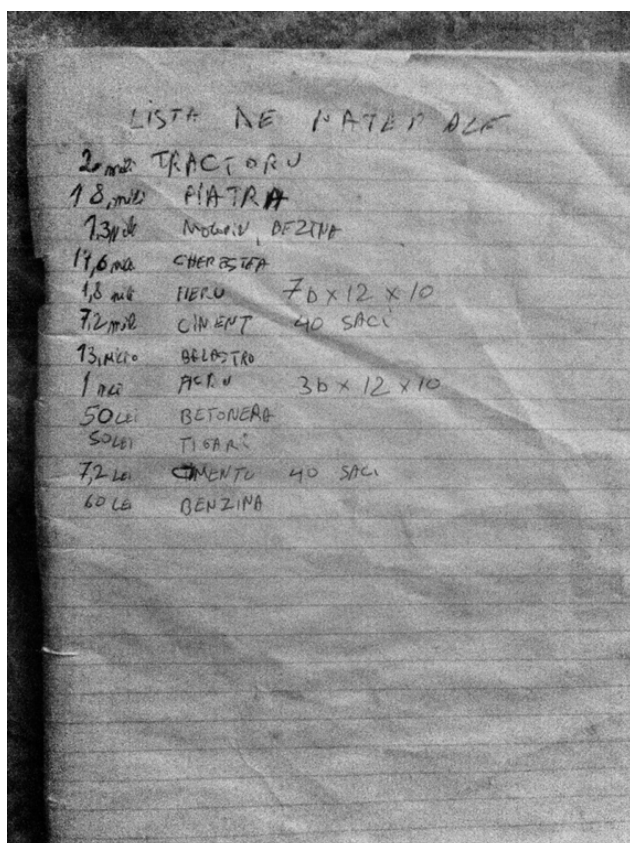
FIGURE 21: List of materials needed and related costs to start the work

Mihai, Valeriu, the son of the latter, Iuli, and Dana's younger brother clean the land together with the mason, and on August 2 everything is ready. The food for the week is purchased, and in the morning of the following day the men arrive from Vadrea: Mihai's father and the brothers (from the oldest to the youngest teenager). As soon as they arrive, they start to work. The women, after serving coffee and breakfast (bread, cheese, bacon, etc.), rearrange the house and start cooking.

There is a bit of excitement, the grandmother and Dana don't get along very well; I give a hand above all by looking after the children: this time, in fact, it is not a question of cooking for the grandmother or for the cousin Nicolae – as happened in March and April – but for *the men who were working*. And the men have strong roles: they are the father-in-law, the husband, the husband's

brothers… And even the men of the house, like Valeriu and Costantin, demand greater respect in that situation.

I must, therefore, adapt the relations to the new context: Mihai is no longer Mihai, but a man to whom things must be asked at the right moment, or not asked at all; Ioan, the teenage brother of Dana, whom I knew already as a child, is not the boy I reproach when he is in Italy or with whom I make jokes about his 'girlfriends', but a young man to whom food must be served when he is back from work.

Even among women there are hierarchies, and I come last, since I cannot prepare food as men like (one must be sure that the food is made in the proper way, and as they expect), nor do I have a husband to serve[26].

This means that in this specific situation I do things that are very similar to those that teenagers would do, if they were at home: I prepare the table, cut bread, I quickly buy it in the shop if it finishes (and this is bad), I serve water and beer, clean the table, help to wash the dishes. Sometimes, if needed, I bring the dishes: a task which I do increasingly frequently when *mamaia* (the grandmother) notes that I can actually do it (even when they are boiling and exceedingly full of *ciorb*ă, soup). To measure on myself the respect and the changes of attitude that this situation involved has been fundamental to understanding the internal mechanisms.

While men eat, the women stay in the kitchen or at the side of the table, listen the conversations of the men (and later on, with great precision and subtle rhetoric, circulate, making 'assessments' and preparing 'strategies' if need be, or simply preparing for something that will happen), and staying ready to immediately bring them what they ask for (more food, something else to drink …).

My presence is "reshaped" even by men, particularly by those who know me less (even if I have been with them as a guest twice, staying for several days each time) and the use of humour. For instance, Mihai's father, when Dana is asking me to bring some soup also for little Marco (and I do it wrongly twice, since I bring it with too much fat) says, laughing: "Our women are *badanti*[27] in your country and you do it with us".

When the lunch comes close to the end, the women become less nervous: everything has gone well, the men (and the father-in-law in the first place) are satisfied, and they drink coffee in the shadow in the *grădină*, some of them together with a cigarette.

We can eat too. Dana and the grandmother are always worried that I do not eat enough. *Mamaia* sometimes invites Dana's father-in-law to rest for a while, but he regularly and politely refuses, and goes back to work with the others.

The solidarity between relatives, which in living nearby also involves production and reproduction, here remodelled according to the needs of the case, is the basis on which the construction of the house can take place. All the men in the parental network, who are present in Romania and who are not already working elsewhere, participate. The tenacity of parental ties and their persistence even on a symbolic level make the construction of the house a social and cultural fact in which the kinship (ascending and descending, by consanguinity and affinity) is 'deposited'.

Also for Mihai and Dana's house, once the foundations, the external walls and the roof have been made, the work stops as happens in all the many cases we know. And it is not certain that it will be resumed in August of the following year: the time of construction of the house follows the state of the resources that families are able to put away, and these – in turn – are linked to the vicissitudes in the immigration country[28].

Mihai and Dana's home remains essentially in the same state for three consecutive years. Finally we start to put in the windows and the front door, then the internal doors. At this point, the house – four years have now passed – is ready to accommodate the first pieces of furniture and the first objects. Next year it is hoped that it can be plastered externally and painted internally, "So, Sabri, – Dana tells me with her eyes shining – when I go home, I won't go to my mother's anymore, I'll go to my house".

---

[26] Also with the presence of Dana and her husband's female cousin, who in the second week also contributed to the construction, the grandmother, who saw me slightly worried when having to serve lunch, tells me "let it go, they (the two women who are her grandchildren, Dana and Maricla) will serve their men".

[27] This precise word was used when speaking in Romanian.

[28] Teodorescu also notes that "the investments made by the Rudari are gradual and often interrupted by insufficient funds" (2020: 103).

Open conclusions

The text explores the interaction between home making – the social construction process of the domestic sphere – and house building – the actual building of a house, which is full of significance –, an exploration underscored by the dense ethnographic experience of the families and their living places, in Romania and Italy. Considering these multifaceted processes, the research and reflection proposed here are based on the micro dimension of the family unit, the meso dimension of the kinship and migratory networks and the macro dimension of (ethnic) social categories and the territory.

The territory, as we have seen, becomes not only a map where we can observe the exclusion/inclusion dynamics of the families considered, but also and above all a field in which people build and renegotiate their complex role in society as a whole. The diachronic dimension of this socio-spatial negotiation is provided by combining emic visions of oral memory with the changes over time identified by ethnografic research, including them both in the village's social geography.

The case study, as previously discussed, concerns a group of families belonging to a Romanian (and not only Romanian) minority that is considered in Romania as 'gypsy' by mainstream society, but not by the Roma and that in Italy 'disappears' ethnically speaking ('our' Rudari become simply migrant 'Romanians'). Thus it is possible to reveal the practical and circumstantial dimension of ethnic categorisations and how they acquire roles that are sometimes explicit, sometimes latent and other times insignificant in the actors' social practices. The endogamy dimension appears to be the only bond (deeply 'intimate' emic) that maintains this group's real boundaries, however fuzzy they may be.

Returning to Appadurai's perspective of the local dimension as the repertoire of the conditions of possibility discussed in the introduction, it has been possible to show that home making and house building practices reveal the conditions of 'possibility' experienced by those people and represent at the same time an action aiming for the fulfilment of 'imaginable' and 'desirable' futures.

The ethnographic narration of scenarios and factual moments of family life has enabled me to outline the significations circulating among the actors present: the 'family' is thus de-essentialised, reconstructing the processes of production and reproduction that generate it and at the same time 'generate' the house.

There remains the exploration of what we have defined as 'shifts in meaning' linked to the process of homing between the first generation that migrated and their sons and daughters who grew up (or were even born) in Italy. How does their idea of 'feeling they are at home' change? And in which house and where?

FIGURE 22: House in adobe with the roof redone in metal sheets before the migration

FIGURE 23: Foundations in the new part of the village defined 'case vechi'

FIGURE 24: Foundations in the new part of the village

FIGURE 25: Foundations in the new part

FIGURE 26: 'Old' farmhouse, purchased from a Rudari family many years earlier (Vadrea)

FIGURE 27: Expansion of the 'old' farmhouse due to the growing number of family members before the migration.

FIGURE 28: Expansion of the 'old farmhouse using the first remittances

FIGURES 29-30: House under construction

FIGURE 31: House to be completed, already inhabited (summer)

FIGURE 32: New house, with only the kitchen inhabited by an elderly family member who has remained in Romania (winter)

FIGURE 33: Two storey house belonging to a family which immigrated into Italy many years ago and had tried unsuccessfully to go back and live in Romania. The addition of barsand gratings to the ground floor windows and doors can be seen, as a deterrent to thieves

FIGURES 34-35: House under construction with the first and most important building phase underway

FIGURE 36: House under construction with the first and most important building phase underway

FIGURE 37: Rudăreasele and me

FIGURE 38: Rudăreasele and me

REFERENCES

ANTOLINI, Paola
1989   *Los agotes. Historia de una exclusión*. Madrid: Istmo.

APPADURAI, Arjun
2013   *The Future as Cultural Fact. Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso.

BENARROSH-ORSONI, Norah
2019   *La maison double. Lieux, routes et objets d'une migration rom*. Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie.

BENGELSTORF, Jens
2009   *Die "anderen Zigeuner". Zur Ethnizität des Rudari und Bajeschi in Südosteuropa*. Leipzig: Eudora-Verlag.

BLOCK, Martin
1991   [1923] *Die materielle Kultur der rumänischen Zigeuner.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
1936   *Moeurs et coutumes des tziganes*. Paris: Payot.

BOCCAGNI, Paolo
2017   *Migration and the Search for Home. Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

BOURAS, Alain
2018   *La civilisation des clairières. Enquête sur la civilisation de l'arbre en Roumanie. Ethnoécologie, technique et symbolique dans les forêts des Carpates*, avant-propos de P.-H. Stahl. Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté.

CALOTA, Ion
1974   *Graiul rudarilor din Oltenia. Rezumatul tezei de doctorat*. Craiova: Sectorul de reprografie al Centrului de ştiinţe sociale.
1995   *Rudarii din Oltenia. Studiu din dialectologie şi de geografie lingvistica româneasca*. Craiova: Sibila.
1996   Elemente sud-dunărene în graiul rudarilor din Oltenia. *Dacoromania* serie nouă II: 47-51.

CHELCEA, Ion
1943   Les Rudari de Muscel: contribution à l'étude des Tziganes. *Archives pour la science et la réforme sociales* XVI (1-4): 81-130.
1944a   *Ţiganii din România: monografie etnografică Bucureşti*: Institutul Central de Statistică.
1944b   *Rudari. Contribuţie la o 'enigmă' etnografică*. Bucureşti: Casa Şcoalelor.
1969   Rudarii de pe Valea Dunării (între cursul inferior al Oltului şi Mostiştei). *Comunicări. Seria Etnografică* III: 3-37.

CHERATA, Lucian
2015   [2008] Cine sunt rudari. *Arhivă Linguistică* 4.
        https://limbaromana.org/revista/cine-sunt-rudarii/#

CONSTANTIN, Marin
2016   Arta cioplirii lemnului la rudarii din Băbeni (judeţul Vâlcea). În *Antropologie şi spiritualitate*. Andrei Kozma, Cristiana Glavce – Costantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici (eds). Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române. Pp: 186-201.

DORONDEL, Şerban
2007   Ethnicity, state and access to natural resources in the southeastern Europe. The Rudari case. In *Transborder identities. The Romanian-speaking population in Bulgaria*. Stelu Şerban (ed). Bucureşti: Paideia. Pp. 215-239.

FAVELL, Adrian
2015   *Immigration, Integration and Mobility: New Agendas in Migration Studies. Essays 1998 – 2014*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

FOTINO, Dionisiu
1859   *Istoria generala a Daciei*. Bucureşti: Imprimeria naţională a lui Iosef Romanov et Companie.

GRILLO, Ralph D.
2008   Riflessioni sull'approccio transnazionale alle migrazioni. In *Migrazioni transnazionali dall'Africa. Etnografie a confronto*. Bruno Riccio (ed). Torino: UTET.

GUŢĂ, Armand (ed)
2009   *Rudari – o enigmă balcanică*. Bucureşti: Vestala.

MARCETTI, Corrado – PABA Giancarlo – PECORIELLO, Anna Lisa – TOSI CAMBINI, Sabrina
2011   L'ex-sanatorio Luzzi nel comune di Sesto Fiorentino: racconto di un'esperienza, tra emergenza abitativa, progettualità sociale e impotenza delle politiche istituzionali. In *Housing Frontline. Inclusione sociale e processi di autocostruzione e autorecupero*. Corrado Marcetti – Giancarlo Paba – Anna Lisa Pecoriello – Nicola Solimano (eds). Firenze: Firenze University Press. Pp. 169-209.

MARCETTI, Corrado – TOSI CAMBINI, Sabrina
2013   Urban places and public space: the Luzzi case study. In *Living Landscapes (landscapes for living) Policies, Practices*. Camilla Perrone (ed). *Planum. The Journal of Urbanism* 27 (2).

MARUSCHIAKOVA, Elena – POPOV, Vesselin
2013   'Gypsy' groups in Eastern Europe: Ethnonyms vs. professionyms. *Romani Studies* 23 (1): 61-82.

NICOLĂESCU-PLOPŞOR, Constantin S.
1922   Gurbanele. *Arhivele Olteniei* I/1: 35-40.

NI SHUINÉAR, Sinéad
2005   Viaggatori irlandesi: una cultura anti-gerarchia. In *La dipendenza. Antropologia delle relazioni di dominio*. Pier Giorgio Solinas (ed). Lecce: Argo. Pp: 335-343.

PETROVICI, Emil
1938   'Românii' din Serbia Occidentală. *Dacoromania* IX: 224-236.

PIASERE, Leonardo
1995   *Comunità girovaghe, comunità zingare*. Napoli: Liguori.

POLI, Roberto
2014   Anticipation: A New Thread for the Human and Social Sciences? *CADMUS* 2(3), part 1: 23-36.

RAȚ, Cristina
2018   *Social Citizenship at the Margins*. In *Racialized Labour in Romania: Spaces of Marginality at the Periphery of Global Capitalism*. Enikő Vincze – Norbert Petrovici – Cristina Raț – Giovanni Picker (eds). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 97-121.

RICCIO, Bruno (ed)
2019   *Mobilità. Incursioni etnografiche*. Milano: Mondadori.

ŞERBAN, Stelu
2007   Politics against ethnicity. The case of Rudari from Varna district. In *Transborder identities. The Romanian-speaking population in Bulgaria*. Stelu Şerban (ed.). Bucureşti: Paideia. Pp. 241-276.

SHELLER, Mimi – URRY, John
2006   The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207-226.

SLAVKOVA, Magdalena
2017   Social Ties of Bulgarians and Rudari in the Mediterranean Countries. *Sator* 18: *Balkan and Balticum. Current studies in the Postsocialist Space*: 42-69.

SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, Annemarie
2018   Rudarii și patrimoniul cultural imaterial. In *Patrimoniu și patrimonializare*. Elena Rodica Colta (ed). Bucureşti: Editura Etnologică. Pp. 174-194.

STAHL, Paul-Henri
1972   L'Habitation enterrée dans la région orientale du Danube (XIXe et XXe siècles). *L'Homme* 12 (4): 37-61.
1991   Tre insediamenti di Rudari in Romania. *La ricerca folklorica* 22: 55-66.

TEODORESCU, Dominic
2020   Homeownership, mobility, and home: a relational housing study of Argentine Ludar and Romanian Rudari. *Geoforum* 116: 98-109.

TESĂR, Cătălina
2016   Houses under Construction: Conspicuous Consumption and the Values of the Youth among Romanian Cortorari Gypsies. In *Gypsy Economy. Romani Livelihoods and Notions of Worth in the 21st Century*. Micol Brazzabeni – Manuela Ivone Cunha – Martin Fotta (eds), New York and Oxford: Berghahn. Pp. 181-200.

TOMA Stefánia – TESĂr, Cătălina – LÁSZLÓ Fosztó
2017   Romanian Roma at Home: Mobility Patterns, Migration Experiences, Networks, and Remittances. In *Open Borders, Unlocked Cultures: Romanian Roma Migrants in Western Europe*. Yaron Matras – Daniele Viktor Leggio (eds). London: Routledge. Pp. 57-82.

Tosi Cambini, Sabrina

2010   *Luoghi e persone: Casa Luzzi*, research report, Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci.

2016a   para 2. Ethnography in Florence, para 3. Local Policies in Florence. In *Report on the Follow up Survey*, MigRom Project, University of Verona.

2016b   Da un villaggio del sud della Romania a una città del centro Italia. Alcuni elementi di riflessione intorno al tempo, allo spazio e al senso nella migrazione di una rete di famiglie di *rudari*. In *Italia Romaní*, vol. 6. Stefania Pontrandolfo & Leonardo Piasere (eds). Roma: CISU.

2021   (forthcoming) *Altri confini. Storia, mobilità e migrazioni di una rete di famiglie rudari tra la Romania e l'Italia*, Milano: Mimesis.

Tosi Cambini, Sabrina – Beluschi Fabeni, Giuseppe

2017   Antiziganisms. Ethnographic Engagements in European Cities. *ANUAC* 6 (1), Thematic Section.

Ponticelli. The unexpected

Giovanna Marrazzo, *University of Siena*

ABSTRACT

Waiting for the train at a small station of the circumvesuviana train line in the outskirts of a city, waiting in a courtyard transformed by time in new urban architectures, waiting in the large buildings of the council housing, waiting at the railway station in the city center. Places that cross the metropolitan spaces, characterizing them with their forms and hosting lives in transit which adapt themselves to the places where they lived. Ponticelli, the eastern outskirts of Naples, is a difficult neighborhood because of the stagnant economy, rich in history and traditions is tight between the status of outskirts and a strong will to emerge. *In-attese* is a photographic work carried out in parallel with an ethnographic study for about eighteen months. The photographs here presented show symptomatic places of the urban and social transformations that have taken place from the post-war period to the present day and portray forms of cultural persistence that create social cohesion in an existential coexistence that characterizes the face of the neighborhood.

KEYWORDS

Ponticelli, Naples, circumvesuviana, courtyards, waiting time, expectation, outskirts.

BIO

Giovanna Marrazzo earned a bachelor's degree in Art History at the University of Naples and a master's degree in Anthropology and Visual Languages at the University of Siena. She has always cultivated a great passion in visual languages, which she was also able to expand after studying in Paris. She approached photography in 2017; and during her ethnographic studies, carried out in Ponticelli, she applied photographic language as a documentation tool, experimenting with its aesthetic and emotional potential. She exhibited in the collective Ponticelli X at the Cloister of Santa Maria La Nova in Naples in May 2018, at the Casa del Popolo in Ponticelli in September of the same year and at the PAN in Naples in March-April 2019.

gio.marrazz@gmail.com

In-attese

In-attese was born from a visual documentation project[1] of the suburbs of Naples carried out between October 2017 and March 2019. The ethnographic research conducted in the Ponticelli area allowed me to enter into a relationship with the social fabric of the neighborhood and to begin to explore photographically the territory.

During the eighteen-month realization, three photographic exhibitions were set up, during which I subjected visitors to semi-structured anonymous interviews to investigate the perception that the inhabitants of Ponticelli (and those who were not) had about the neighborhood through the images included in the exhibition. The purpose was to collect information about the feelings on the identity of the inhabitants of Ponticelli and their relationship with the environment, starting from an image. The relationship established between the photographic image and the spectators allowed them to talk about their experiential and emotional impressions. Whether, on the one hand, the images represented the reality of the neighborhood, on the other they allowed the inhabitants to endow them with their symbolic value regardless the real data.

For the realization of the interviews and the analysis of the images I referred to a semiotic perspective that was accompanied by the phenomenological one linked to the specific context, which allowed me to produce an interesting collection of information on the experiences and perception of identity of the inhabitants of Ponticelli. The ethnographic study has highlighted a complex relationship of the inhabitants with their environment, characterized by a strong desire of affirmation of existence and resistance against a feeling of absorption of their lives by the city of Naples. These feelings are expressed in a long expectation for movement and evolution.

The stylistic choice of using color and the almost total absence of human figures in the photographs was dictated by the will to represent a living and changing environment as Ponticelli. The inhabitants although feeling an institutional void and an existential solitude towards the future, they struggle every day against a feeling of uncertainty and for the affirmation of their desire for life.

The urban context: the courtyards and Santa Maria della Neve

A courtyard in the historic center of the neighborhood, which once represented a social space for the families who lived there, it has now given way to new architectures, more modern and functional to housing problems. This transformation reduces relational and collaborative forms to a minimum. Persistence of the past and of an agricultural economy, these courtyards still retain traces of their identity and adapt themselves to new forms of living.

Santa Maria della Neve

Patron saint of Ponticelli. Dressed up in a white robe embroidered in gold and with the Child in her arms, she is carried in procession every year on August 5th on a high wooden cart through the streets of the neighborhood. During the celebration, the inhabitants of Ponticelli recognize themselves as members of a community with a feeling of devotion and belonging to this symbol of religious and territorial identity.

The original effigy of the Madonna is preserved in the church in the center of the neighborhood, but her image is found everywhere, in the streets as in the courtyards in a direct and familiar relationship with the inhabitants that does not end during the celebrations, but lives day after day.

[1] The project is based on a idea of Luca Sorbo, formerly professor of History and Technical Photography at the Academy of Arts in Naples.

PHOTO 1: Enlargement of a courtyard of Ponticelli's historical center, March 2018

PHOTO 2: View of a courtyard of what once was a garden used as a vegetable garden, March 2018

PHOTO 3: Devotional image of Santa Maria della Neve at a courtyard in Ponticelli, December 2017

PHOTO 4: Devotional image of the Virgin with Child decorated for Christmas celebrations, December 2017

The circumvesuviana

A small entrance very close to the historic center of the neighborhood, an overpass that connects the station tracks that lead trains to and from Naples, the ticket office always closed and some weatherworn iron benches for the travelers to wait. The Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli is the chosen place to enter and exit the neighborhood, a metaphor of movement from the space of everyday life.

Photo 5: Entrance to the circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, March 2018
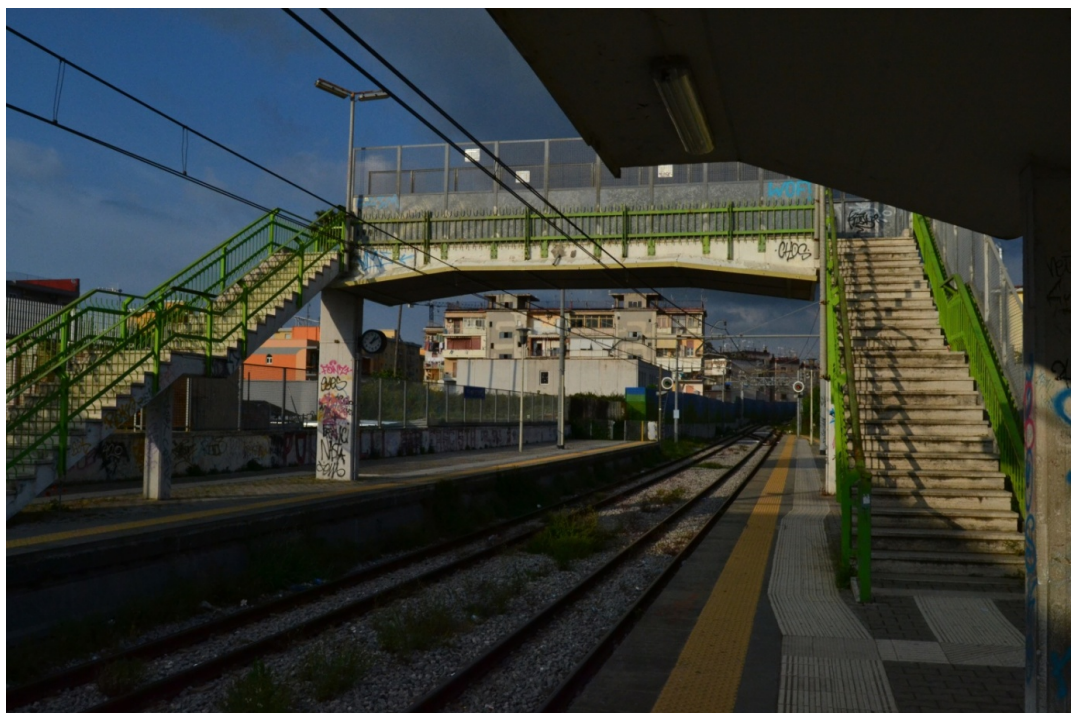
Photo 6: Circumvesuviana overpass at Ponticelli, May 2018

PHOTO 7: View of the Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli from the overpass, May 2018
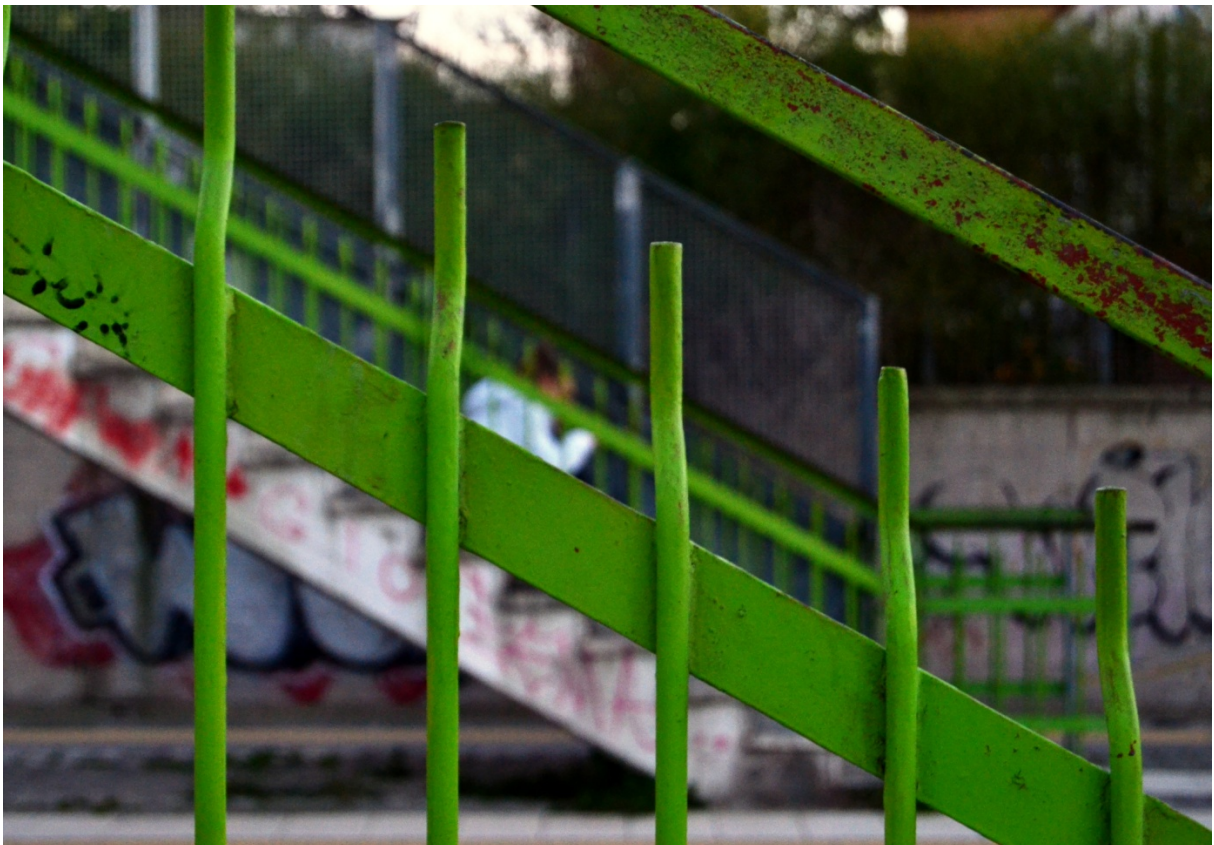
PHOTO 8: The Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, stairway to the overpass, February 2019

PHOTO 9: The Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, train from Naples, February 2019

Travelling

The short journey to and from Naples, a metaphor of escape and return for the inhabitants of the Ponticelli. A complex identity relationship of the neighborhood towards the city of Naples, of recognition and denial, of hope and damnation, possibility of escape and improvement of their living conditions.

PHOTO 10: A traveller on a circumvesuviana coach to Ponticelli, November 2017

Photo 11: Inside a circumvesuviana coach to Ponticelli, November 2018

Photo 12: Inside a circumvesuviana coach to Ponticelli, February 2019

PHOTO 13: Inside a circumvesuviana coach to Ponticelli, January 2019

The Piazza Garibaldi's circumvesuviana station in Naples

White lights illuminate an otherwise completely dark space, neon signs indicate the departure or arrival of trains, four tracks that connect the entire Vesuvian territory, including Ponticelli. The Piazza Garibaldi's circumvesuviana station in Naples is the point of arrival or departure for travelers moving from neighboring districts, it is a crossroads of lives that touch each other, often without meeting.
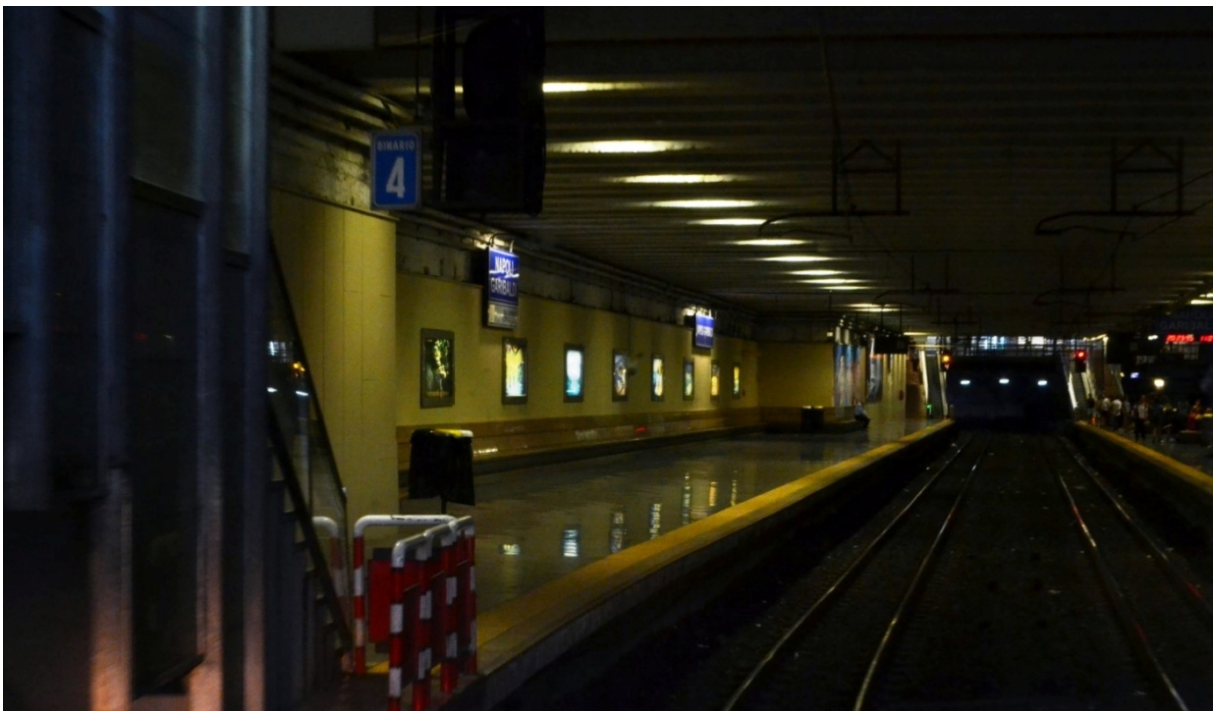
PHOTO 14: Piazza Garibaldi circumvesuviana station in Naples, train arrival, July 2018

PHOTO 15: Piazza Garibaldi circumvesuviana station in Naples, November 2017
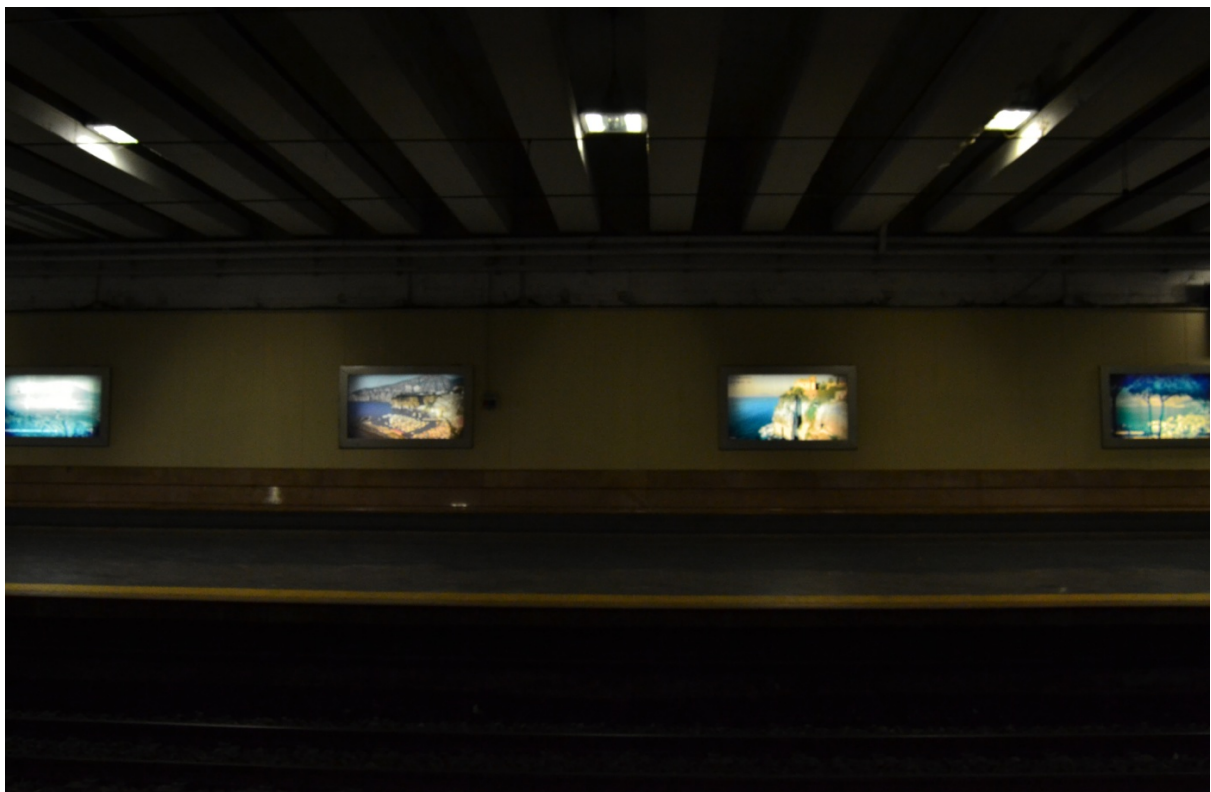
PHOTO 16: Piazza Garibaldi circumvesuviana station in Naples, May 2018

Waiting for

Waiting time and the unexpected. The journey to an unknown and known destination, the escape and return, waiting time and movement, stillness and urgency. Fantasy of leaving and returning, of abandonment and recovery, of departures and stationing. Waiting for expected or the unexpected.

Photo 17: Piazza Garibaldi circumvesuviana station in Naples, passengers waiting, September 2018

Photo 18: Piazza Garibaldi circumvesuviana station in Naples, passengers waiting, September 2018

PHOTO 19: The circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, passengers waiting, October 2017

PHOTO 20: The Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, passengers waiting, February 2019

Photo 21: The Circumvesuviana station at Ponticelli, platform, February 2019

Photography, feelings and homes

Filippo Steven Ferrara, *University of Siena*

ABSTRACT

This selection of images is the result of a photography laboratory organized with children and teenagers aged between 9 and 14 over a period of six months, between April and September 2019. The laboratory was one of the two courses, painting and photography, *Angeli della Città* – a small volunteering organization based in the center of Florence providing clothing and food supplies to individuals and families living under the poverty threshold – organized in order to grant access to children and adolescents coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to artistic techniques, teachings and instruments which in most cases remain precluded to them. Through a personal approach to their subjects and to the photographic medium itself, the participants work creatively convey a unique representation of their environments and feelings.

KEYWORDS

photography, laboratory, access, representation, disadvantaged, children, Florence, volunteering, organization

BIO

After having pursued my bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, I studied photojournalism at Officine Fotografiche in Rome. Thanks to my first photographic project, *Samin*, I was selected for a fellowship program offered by the photo agency Parallelozero. Currently, as a freelance photographer, I'm working on a long-term commissioned project focusing on marginality in the city of Florence. In parallel to that, I lead photography courses and study anthropology at the University of Siena.

filipposteven@gmail.com

This selection of images is the result of a photography laboratory I led with children and teenagers aged between 9 and 14 over a period of six months, between April and September 2019. The laboratory was one of the two courses, painting and photography, *Angeli della Città* – a small volunteering organization based in the center of Florence providing clothing and food supplies to individuals and families living under the poverty threshold – was able to conduct thanks to financing from Regione Toscana.

The courses, and the photography laboratory in particular, were conceived as an expansion of the services provided to the organization's users in order to grant access to children and adolescents coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to artistic techniques, teachings and instruments which in most cases remain precluded to them due to the high costs they involve (e.g. for art and photography courses, cameras and SD cards, pencils and colors). As we applied for financing from Regione Toscana, we also made explicit our intention to donate the materials to the participants after the conclusion of the courses in order to not let them just be a timely limited experience, but rather a first step into a creative practice which later, if interested, the participants could continue practicing on their own.

At the same time, the idea has been not only to introduce the participants to an array of technical competences and stylistic know-hows, providing them, in the case of the photography laboratory, with camera equipment and introducing them to its use, but instead to accompany them through the development of a visual narration of theirselves and their home and familiar environment.

After a first phase in which I introduced the participants to the medium of photography and to a selection of remarkable photographic bodies of work which gave them a glimpse of the vastity of the medium's possible applications, followed by photo-walks through the city of Florence and different group and individual exercises on portraiture, landscape and street photography, we gradually began focusing more and more on visual storytelling and in particular on the different approaches of narration and self-representation the photographic medium makes possible.

The participants began taking pictures at home, during family trips to lakes and parks, on buses and in the streets. They photographed sunsets, night skies, silhouettes, statues, tourists, pigeons, buildings, vendors, pets, flowers, ice creams, walls, leaves, trees, water reflections, shadows and lights seeping in through windows. They portrayed parents, siblings and friends, exploring framings and lightings (natural and artificial), testing compositions and self-portraits techniques.

Gradually, as both the familiarity with the medium and the cohesion of the group grew, some of the participants began shifting from a mere documentary approach to their surroundings to a more introspective and conceptual one, turning their emotions and personal stories into central topics of their work which were later shared with the other participants. Joy, sadness, absence, anger, solitude and love began to be elaborated especially by the older participants through the use of light and shadows; black and white acquired expressive significance and posed self-portraits in many cases were the chosen technique of self-expression.

As I could observe, homes — apartments, housing projects and shelters for mothers and children — emerged as the most common contexts in which the participants made their pictures.

Staging portraits and self-portraits, focusing on details, photographing their mothers, siblings and fathers in the home environment, the participants explored their familiar environment rediscovering it through a personal photographic approach shedding a light on their intimacy and allowing the viewer to enter this sphere through personal perspectives.

But photographing their home environments was also interpreted in different ways, connected to moments of recreation with the family in the park, playful moments with siblings or to still photos of empty rooms and staged self-portraits expressing the photographers' feelings.

In many cases, a central element to the photos were windows, both as non-visible sources of light suggestively illuminating the depicted scene and as observation points from which capturing the outside world, being this the streets or a nocturnal sky.

Although the participants had been given instructions regarding the use and functioning of the camera and the work they had to do, each of them developed an individual approach to what and how to photograph. Nor was the classic 'individual authoriality' of the photographic act always followed, on the contrary: the siblings which were not allowed to participate due to the age limit we decided to pose to access the laboratory became assistants, models and pupils of their older sisters, appearing in several

photos taken at home; in the case of two siblings who both attended the course, the resulting work which was produced in the context of the shelter for mothers and children they lived in at the time with their mother resulted out of a photographic symbiosis in which the roles of the photographer and the model were constantly interchanged or even subverted by the use of the automatic shutter release.

Some of the participants adopted a playful, ironic approach to the photographs they shot; others a rather intimate one, using their camera in order to create visual notes depicting their mood and feelings. As one participant once wrote in a text message "The laboratory made me discover new things and above all I was able to express my feelings".

The participants had the weekly task to present the pictures taken during the week and to submit them to me and to the group, who commented and discussed, selected or discarded them. The alternation of these two moments was fundamental not only as it allowed to follow each other's work as it was created, but rather to also give the opportunity to the participants to experience how their photos may not just show what they objectively depicted — people, objects, rooms, shadows—, but at the same time could also convey an emotional content to the viewers. The weekly meetings we held at the oratory of the San Frediano in Cestello's church, in the Oltrarno area of Florence, represented thus an essential moment of exchange and discussion, underling the communicative potential of photography. With some moderation from my side, the participants showed admiration and dislike for each others' pictures, discussed the contents and the formal aspects giving constructive and in some cases also not-so-constructive comments and suggestions, sharing their own experiences and the difficulties they encountered.

Although some the aspects of the laboratory may be connected to photovoice practices – a participatory methodology used in social sciences basing on the creation of knowledge through photographs produced by marginalized community members as an alternative and empowering research medium from below – as it's participative character and in some means subversive aim to 'de-éliterize' the medium of photography turning it into a medium of self-expression and (self-)narration in the hands of individuals coming from disadvantaged backgrounds may suggest, the laboratory, also due to the age of the participants, never had the specific ambition of leading to a real social change (Jarldorn 2019). Instead, the laboratory's primary aim was to represent a moment of gathering and learning, fun and experience, combining the single peculiar experience each of the participants lived as he or she were taking photos at home, on the streets, of theirselves or of their families and friends, discovering photography for themselves with a weekly, collective reflection on each other's body of images as it was in the making.

At the same time, it is important to underline that the participants came from underprivileged families with different migration backgrounds and to reconnect this to the frame in which the laboratory took place. The participants were the children of the families who turn to the organization *Angeli della Città* in order to receive food supplies and clothing, belonging to a class of individuals or families whose income, if existing, in most cases lies under the poverty threshold. And even if this underlying aspect was never discussed with the children themselves, it certainly was a central point in the ideation of the laboratory. As the volunteers of the organization, including myself, were very well aware of due to the frequent contact with these families (primarily with the mothers), one of the problematics affecting children coming from low-income families was the lack of free time activities and creative courses. Our intention, thus, was to create a free creative space for children and teenagers in order to tackle this problem, giving the participants the opportunity to experience creative practices and receive teachings from which in most cases they remain excluded.

In particular in the case of the photography laboratory, the aim was also to introduce them to a new mean of expression and narration through which they could be able to depict their own living environment and give voice to and convoy their feelings.

At the end of the courses, the photos and paintings produced during these moments were printed, framed and exhibited in a Florentine theater gaining the approval of the visitors. The project has since then been re-approved for financing by a different institution, which will give us the opportunity to carry on with courses we started in 2019.

* In order to hide the identity of the participants and their relatives, the selection only shows ambient pictures or pictures in which their identity is hidden.

PHOTO 1: Evening sky from the room of one of the laboratory's participants (1)

PHOTO 2: One of the participants' brother waking down the ladder of their new home

PHOTO 3: The mother and the brother of the photographer as they went out to the park

PHOTO 4: Portrait of the mother of one of the participants
on the sofa (the picture was cropped in order to anonymize the subject)

PHOTO 5: Self-portrait at home

PHOTO 6: Self-portrait on the bed

PHOTO 7: The kitchen of one of the participants' home

PHOTO 8: Photo of the room the photographer shares with her sister

PHOTO 9: Sunset and tourists at the Piazzale Michelangelo

PHOTO 10: Roses photographed during a group photo tour

PHOTO 11: Evening sky from the room of one of the laboratory's participants (2)

PHOTO 12: Portrait of one of the participants' younger brother

Photo 13: Detail of the room of one of the participants

References

Jarldorn, Michele
2019   *Photovoice Handbook for Social Workers. Method, Practicalities and Possibilities for Social Change*. London: Palgrave
          Macmillan.

Motel Agip

Sara Camilli, *Independent Photographer*

ABSTRACT

We are in Secondigliano, in an Agip motel, a building occupied by dozens of Neapolitan families about 18 years ago. Already in 2014, the gravity of this reality was publicly denounced and today, after some time, the situation seems to have worsened. Many families still live in the former motel in inhumane conditions: between walled up rooms, mice, waste and unacceptable sanitary conditions. The basements of the building are infested with mice and due to the rupture of some sewer pipes, the rooms have turned into a huge cloaca. They are families on the list for years for a municipal house, families cleared of the sails of Scampia that have not yet received an effective response to the promises of a better housing solution. Women, children, families, elderly people in serious health conditions, these are the inhabitants of the motel, people who resist despite the degradation in which they are forced to live. I lived with them to tell their story from within, I met all the tenants of this extravagant motel, I tasted their strength, valued their dignity, thanked them for their generosity. They are a large family that supports itself, that helps itself, protects itself, a large house that welcomes those who cannot live in full autonomy, without making distinctions of color, sex, age, origin. A great example of hospitality albeit a paradox. It is a story because there are people, there are stories, but it is a denunciation because no human being should be deprived of fundamental rights, such as a house, a shelter, regardless of economic differences.

KEYWORDS

photojournalism, liminal space, occupation, home, border, suburbs, Secondigliano (Naples)

BIO

Sara Camilli was born in Rome in 1984.
After graduating in Visual Anthropology, she continued her studies in Photography obtaining a first Master in Photojournalism and a second in Authorial Photography both at Officine Fotografiche Roma.
During her journey, Camilli has always sought a meeting point between photography and anthropology, considering these two areas always in relation to each other as if they were inseparable, despite the fact that they use different languages. The current center of her research are the Roman suburbs with their problems, their marginality and all the different social dynamics that revolve around the concept of living on the margins. In 2014 his works were exhibited at FotoLeggendo and SiFest – Savignano Images Festival. She also won a one-year scholarship to CSF Adams in photojournalism. In 2015 she received an honorable mention at the Umbria World Fest in Foligno. In 2016 she came first classified in the *Beyond the walls of Rome* competition exhibiting at the Macro Testaccio in Rome, winning a scholarship at the IED lasting 6 months. In 2017, for the curatorship of Annalisa D 'Angelo, she exhibited at Officine Fotografiche Roma together with Joan Liftin (Magnum) in the Obiettivo Donna review, with her work, six floors of stories, finalist at the Rome photography festival. Also in 2017, she collaborated with the Goethe Institut in Rome with a project on the stigmatization of the suburbs, a work exhibited at the end of the year, in the suburbs where it was developed.
Currently, she lives and works between Rome and Naples.

sara.antropologia@gmail.com

Siamo a Secondigliano, in un Ex motel Agip, una palazzina occupata da decine di famiglie napoletane all'incirca 18 anni fa. Già nel 2014 si era denunciato pubblicamente la gravità di questa realtà e oggi, a distanza di tempo, la situazione sembra essersi aggravata. Nell'ex motel abitano ancora molte famiglie in condizioni disumane: tra stanze murate, topi, rifiuti e condizione igienico sanitarie inaccettabili. Gli scantinati del palazzo sono infestati da topi e a causa della rottura di alcune tubature fognarie, gli ambienti si sono trasformati in una enorme cloaca. Sono famiglie in lista da anni per una casa comunale, famiglie sgomberate dalle vele di Scampia che non hanno ancora ricevuto risposta effettiva alle promesse di una soluzione abitativa migliore. Donne, bambini, famiglie, anziani in gravi condizioni di salute, sono questi gli abitanti del motel, persone che resistono nonostante il degrado in cui sono costretti a vivere. Ho vissuto con loro per raccontare da dentro la loro storia, ho conosciuto tutti gli inquilini di questo stravagante motel, ne ho assaporato la forza, stimato la dignità, ringraziato per la generosità. Sono una grande famiglia che si auto-sostiene, che si aiuta, si protegge, una grande casa che accoglie chi non riesce a vivere nella piena autonomia, senza fare distinzioni di colore, sesso, età, provenienza. Un grande esempio di accoglienza per quanto un paradosso. È un racconto perché ci sono delle persone, ci sono storie ma è una denuncia perché a nessun esser umano andrebbero tolti i diritti fondamentali, quali una casa, un riparo, indipendentemente dalle differenze economiche.

Mi occupo da diverso tempo di raccontare la vita ai margini, qualunque essa sia e qualunque struttura abbia deciso di ricreare. Il concetto di casa di abitare e il diritto che ne consegue sono i fili rossi della mia ricerca visiva. A Secondigliano, quartiere periferico di Napoli, mi sono addentrata in questo motel per una coincidenza particolare. Avevo intrapreso un progetto di mappatura in Italia dei rimanenti motel Agip, al fine di sviscerare il concetto di motel, di spazio transitorio, di non luogo con dei tratti però del tutto specifici. Dalle immagini di archivio del deposito ENI, sono arrivata al motel di Secondigliano, scoprendo la sua attuale funzionalità da un servizio televisivo prossimo alla mia ricerca. Cosi decido di andare, bussare e osservare. Quello che ho trovato nel motel, ha deviato la mia iniziale ricerca per dare spazio alla sorprendente *communitas* che stava via via stava prendendo vita in quei setti piani di quel vecchio hotel in disuso. Il mio approccio è stato progressivo. Sono andata e tornata da Roma diverse volte per poi, dopo un anno circa, andare a vivere stabilmente nel motel per un mese. Avevo bisogno di creare fiducia e di diventare invisibile. Il tempo in questo è stato un elemento imprescindibile, cosi come in tutte le relazioni di fiducia reciproca. Fin dal primo giorno ho chiaramente dichiarato le mie intenzioni per concordare trasparenza e dare inizio ad un sistema di scambio che ha permesso lo sviluppo del lavoro senza nessun tipo di intralcio. Nel motel vivono varie famiglie che si sono trovate senza una casa dopo la demolizione di una parte delle Vele e la mancata promessa di assegnazione di case popolare. Via via il motel ha ospitato alcune persone messe ai margini dal sistema vigente. Adolescenti incinte e ripudiate dalla famiglia, ex tossici dipendenti, disoccupati, ragazzi senza famiglia. Il motel è una zona temporaneamente autonoma. È un luogo liberato dal sistema ordinario, con una potenza trasformatrice e creatrice intrinseca, dove i rapporti personali non sono verticali ma orizzontali. È un iter zona, fuori dal sistema, fuori dalla giurisdizione, ma comunque esistente all'interno di essa, pensiamo semplicemente alla possibilità ,sempre presente, di poter esse sgomberati. Possiamo definarla come una realtà nascosta nell'interstizi di sistema, che ha la caratteristica, come ce l'hanno tutte le varie forme di occupazione abitativa, di esser temporanea e quindi di sparire e ricrearsi in un altro dove, quando il sistema ordinariamente condiviso, cerca di assoggettale.

È dunque un lavoro su di una occupazione abitativa in un quartiere periferico di Napoli, Secondigliano. Dove però per periferia intendo: *perí* intorno e *pherein* portare. Contornare, confinare. Quando si parla di periferia il richiamo a visioni semplicistiche e condivise è immediato. Vengono definite come zone di margine, d'illegalità, di criminalità, come spazi di transizione, di degrado e liminalità. Senza demistificare, aggiungo a questo quadro il mio sentirle come zone liberate, con tutta la sofferenza che la libertà viva si porta appresso. Spaccati vividi, lucenti, puri, reali. Possibili. Inaccessibili da una parte e abbandonati dall'altra, costretti a reinventarsi per resistere. Ma è anche una riflessione sulla caducità e la reversibilità delle definizioni assolute e univoche di concetti come: famiglia, casa, condivisione, abitare lavoro. Sono sempre stata affascinata da chi, per caso o per scelta, è rimasto immune alla violenta influenza delle griglie culturali e alla stretta gabbia delle aspettative condivise di sistema. Ho sempre osservato queste persone con incanto, febbre e amore. Sono certa però che se mi ci fossi davvero con-fusa non sarei più stata in grado di guardare e di raccontare così tanta bellezza. Sono diamanti che la città nasconde, come fili rossi, ognuno a sé e tutti uniti dentro e dietro questi frammenti visivi di vita e virtù.

PHOTO 1: Vesuvius seen from the motel window

PHOTO 2: Ground floor of the motel, where some of the tenants work the wood

PHOTO 3: Portrait of boy in the garden where there is waste in the open

PHOTO 4: Portrait of one of the motel residents in her room

PHOTO 5: Details of a motel room

PHOTO 6: Portrait of one of the families residing in the motel

PHOTO 7: Portrait of one of the residents in her room

PHOTO 8: Portrait of a boy born in the motel

PHOTO 9: The family of Nunzia, who have lived in the motel for 10 years

PHOTO 20: Wall of a motel room

PHOTO 31: Portrait of a boy born in the motel

PHOTO 42: Portrait of one of the inhabitants

PHOTO 53: details of the wall of a motel room

PHOTO 64: Nunzia's children playing after school

Photo 75: Beautician visiting the motel

Photo 86: Detail of the wall of one of the motel rooms

PHOTO 97: Moment of relaxation after dinner

PHOTO 108: Portrait of the Nunzia's family

PHOTO 119: Nunzia's children playing

PHOTO 20: Wall of a room

PHOTO 212: Portrait of a family recently in the motel
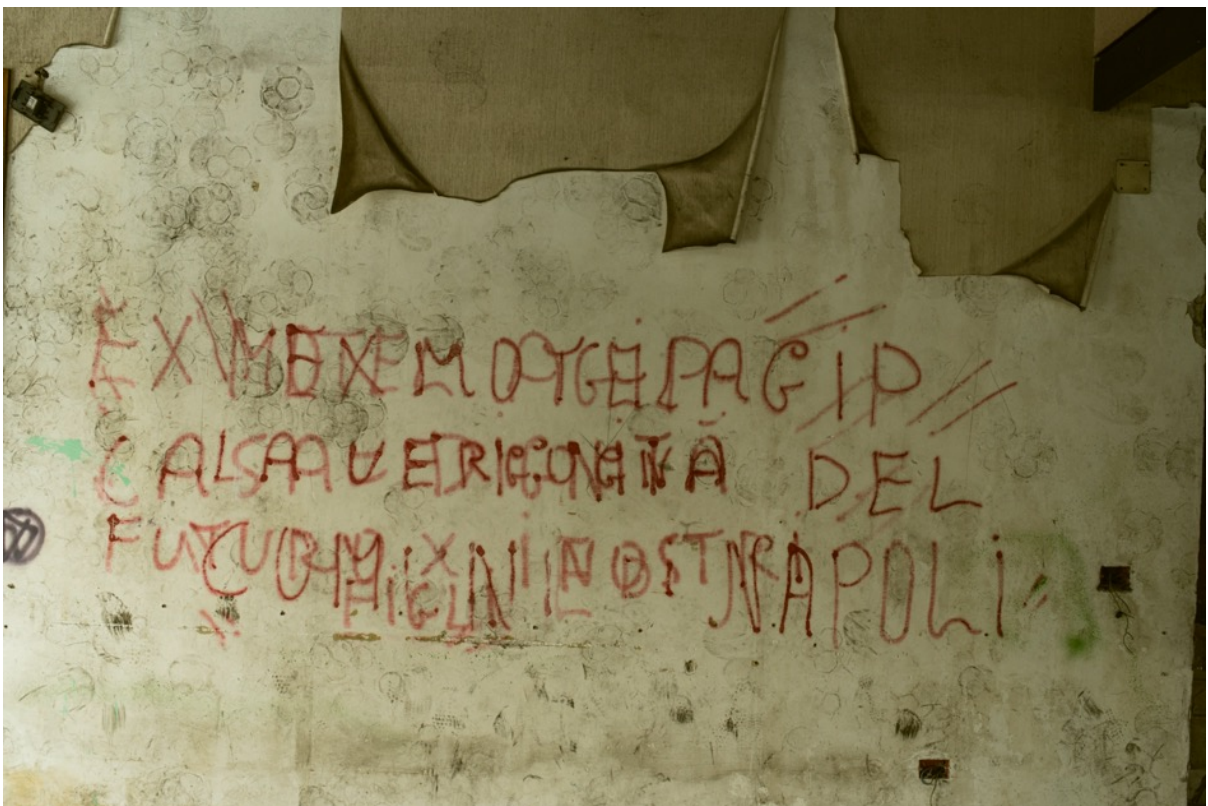
PHOTO 22: Written on the ground floor wall

PHOTO 23: Nunzia's son

PHOTO 24: Nunzia's family with a friend of hers in the motel gallery

PHOTO 25: Whole view of the motel from outside

L'esperienza di una ricerca di antropologia visiva sulle condizioni d'abitazione dei rom in Europa

Silvia Paggi, *Université Côte d'Azur, LIRCES, Nice-France*

ABSTRACT

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork in visual anthropology focusing on the housing conditions of Roma people in Europe, part of the *Wor(l)ds which Exclude* European project. The author, who made the seven resulting ethnographic films, relates the general methodology of her work, and reports some testimony from the people met in six countries: Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom. Carried out in 2013 and 2014, the visual research collected numerous hours of film, as well as photographic documentation. The Italian Roma specialist Leonardo Piasere coordinated the entire project, while the author was responsible for the visual anthropology part of the research, assisted by Valentina Bonifacio.

BIO

Silvia Paggi is an anthropologist and filmmaker, professor emeritus at the Côte d'Azur University of Nice, LIRCES (Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Récits Cultures et Sociétés) research laboratory. After training in the 1980s at the ethnographic film school in Paris with Jean Rouch and Claudine de France, she made ethnographic films based on various fieldwork experiences in Italy, Ivory Coast, France, Samoa and Spain. Her main themes are working techniques, oral history, domestic everyday life, musical behaviours and rituals. She writes primarily about the results of her field research, the theoretical-methodological aspects of research in visual anthropology, and some forms of representation in documentary cinema.

Silvia.PAGGI@univ-cotedazur.fr

Premessa con qualche avvertenza per il lettore

Comincio qui a raccontare alcuni aspetti della ricerca di antropologia visiva, di cui ero responsabile come partner francese[1], nell'ambito del progetto europeo[2] *Wor(l)ds which Exclude,* dedicato alle condizioni dell'abitare dei rom. La ricerca, compresa la sua parte visiva, si è svolta negli altri sei paesi del partenariato – Italia, Portogallo, Regno Unito, Romania, Spagna e Ungheria – in ognuno dei quali i ricercatori analizzavano le politiche abitative rispetto alle popolazioni in questione, con particolare focus sull'uso, nei documenti ufficiali, di stereotipi e terminologie discriminanti: "ci siamo interrogati sull'esistenza di una possibile costruzione sociale stereotipizzata sui Rom che storicamente è diventata condivisa nel discorso pubblico e politico in Europa"[3].

Realizzata nel 2013 e 2014, la ricerca ha prodotto documenti scritti – tra cui, per ogni paese, *National Report* e *Recommendations* – consultabili al sito http://weproject.unice.fr, e per la parte visiva una serie di sette film, *Housing conditions of Roma people in Europe,* oltre a una documentazione fotografica[4]. I *National Reports* di ogni paese presentano un'ampia bibliografia. Per riferimenti generali sui rom in Europa e l'antiziganismo rimando a Leonardo Piasere (1991, 2004, 2012). Altri riferimenti generali sono in nota accanto al capitolo di ogni paese. I link[5] (vimeo o youtube) per vedere i film sono segnalati in nota dopo ogni titolo e in filmografia.

Nel ripercorrere la ricerca fatta, oltre che sulla mia memoria, mi baso essenzialmente sulle riprese, le interviste, i miei diari di campo. Questi ultimi sono assolutamente insoddisfacenti, e ritorna spesso la frase: "non c'è tempo per scrivere". Dal mio punto di vista, la mancanza di tempo[6] è stata la più grande difficoltà per riuscire a integrare, filmandole, situazioni spesso assai diverse da un paese all'altro, anche se accomunate da povertà, discriminazione e disagio.

Tutte le traduzioni in italiano delle citazioni sono mie. Ho cercato di rispettare la forma parlata delle interviste raccolte nei vari paesi, ma si deve tener conto che a volte – soprattutto nel caso di lingue per le quali non ho alcuna competenza (ungherese, rumeno) – si tratta di una traduzione di traduzione, passando quindi dall'inglese, lingua ufficiale per l'insieme del progetto. Ho lasciato le citazioni dai miei diari di campo nella loro forma originale, per conservarne l'immediatezza della scrittura, riflesso di pensieri e sensazioni del momento vissuto. Rispetto alle diverse denominazioni delle popolazioni nei vari paesi – *rom*, *gypsy*, *ciganos*, *tigani*, *gitani*, *zigani*, ecc. – mi attengo agli appellativi con cui loro stessi s'identificano e nominano, così come sono stati trascritti nella loro lingua[7], usando rom, oltre al caso in cui essi stessi così si qualificano, per riferirsi all'insieme di queste popolazioni.

Cominciando a raccontare questa esperienza, so bene che il necessario riassunto non ne restituisce la ricchezza. Il materiale filmato[8] è, naturalmente, molto più vasto di quello che qui riferisco, seguendo l'ordine in cui si è svolta la ricerca di antropologia visiva nei vari paesi, la quale, oltre al rinnovato interesse per le popolazioni protagoniste, ha anche creato nuove amicizie, alcune delle quali si protraggono nel tempo.

1. L'organizzazione della ricerca per la realizzazione filmica

La ricerca di antropologia visiva, principalmente filmica, è stata possibile grazie all'impegno dei partner e avvalendomi del fondamentale aiuto alla realizzazione di Valentina Bonifacio[9]. Nel corso dei due anni, sei meeting dell'insieme dei partner si sono intercalati ai periodi dedicati alle ricerche di antropologia visiva in ciascun paese, implicando, come vedremo, l'indispensabile e preziosa

---

[1] Per il mio laboratorio LIRCES (Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Récits Cultures et Sociétés), Université Côte d'Azur - Nice.

[2] *Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union* (JUST/2011/FRAC/AG/2716).

[3] *Wor(l)ds which Exclude*, e-book del progetto, p. 9 e *Raccomandazioni* in italiano, p. 2.

[4] Le fotografie sono state realizzate, oltre che da me, da Valentina Bonifacio e da Margherita Boccali che ci ha raggiunto in Portogallo e Romania.

[5] Data la volubilità del World Wide Web, i link potranno, col tempo, subire variazioni, nel qual caso, spero rimangano accessibili dal mio sito, attualmente in costruzione.

[6] Oltretutto, a livello personale, questa ricerca si svolse in un periodo sovraccarico di lavoro perché, oltre all'impegno universitario mantenuto in Francia senza alcuna riduzione d'insegnamento, proprio negli stessi anni ero stata nominata in Italia Commissario OCSE nella Commissione per l'abilitazione scientifica nazionale (11/A5-Scienze demoetnoantropologiche).

[7] Per questo motivo non uso il corsivo per queste parole straniere.

[8] L'insieme del girato è di quasi 70 ore. La serie dei 7 film montati approssima le 3 ore.

[9] Professore Associato all'università Ca' Foscari di Venezia. Se non diversamente specificato, il 'noi' si riferisce alla ristretta équipe formata da me e Valentina.

collaborazione dei ricercatori del progetto. Messa a punto durante i primi meeting, l'organizzazione della parte di antropologia visiva della ricerca prevedeva che, in ogni paese, il partner predisponesse alcuni esempi significativi delle situazioni abitative da poter filmare, prendendo i preliminari accordi e avvalendosi di mediatori linguistico-culturali, che operavano in stretta relazione con noi sul terreno. Questi erano poi impegnati con i ricercatori per la trascrizione e traduzione dei materiali registrati, interviste e dialoghi, lavoro indispensabile non solo, come sempre, in etnografia, ma anche per procedere all'ideazione e realizzazione del montaggio filmico. Questo ha richiesto un considerevole impegno collettivo per l'analisi del girato, fase che in etnografia filmica usiamo chiamare 'osservazione differita', ossia la possibilità di rivedere *ad libitum* e anche condividere l'osservazione direttamente filmata sul campo.

Per rispettare i tempi e il budget del progetto, la ricerca di antropologia visiva, in ciascun paese, doveva svolgersi in meno di un mese. Ben presto, un'altra difficoltà, da me stessa provocata, ha incrementato il lavoro da compiere. All'inizio, si trattava di realizzare un solo film per l'insieme del progetto, ma già nel corso del primo anno è emersa una sensibilità che mi dissuadeva dall'amalgamare le differenti realtà e identità incontrate nei vari paesi. Inoltre, la specificità, l'interesse e la ricchezza che ciascuna di queste realtà presentava erano difficilmente riducibili alla durata, necessariamente contenuta, di un solo film. Dopo intense discussioni nel partenariato, il mio punto di vista è stato accettato, ma ha comportato, per non introdurre diseguaglianze, di fare un film per ogni paese[10].

La nostra organizzazione si è poi precisata nel progressivo farsi della ricerca e della realizzazione filmica, adattandosi alla situazione che ogni paese presentava. Già dalle prime esperienze, è stato chiaro che tutto il lavoro, almeno nelle grandi linee, doveva svolgersi durante il periodo sul campo, anche se nel seguito potevo perfezionare il montaggio comunicando col partner a distanza. Sempre sul posto e in collaborazione col partner si sceglievano le parti da includere nella narrazione del film e, man mano che cominciavo a realizzarlo, Valentina lavorava con interpreti e ricercatori alla sottotitolazione in inglese.

Il lavoro sul campo è stato perciò intenso, anche perché concentrato nel secondo anno in quanto, fin dai primi meeting, risultò che quasi tutti i partner domandavano tempo per organizzare l'accoglienza della ricerca di antropologia visiva, rimandandola all'anno seguente. Cominciammo quindi nel 2013 in Italia, col coordinatore del progetto[11] e, seguendo un criterio di difficoltà progressiva per rodarsi, il secondo paese fu, nel gennaio 2014, la Spagna, a Granada, terreno a me familiare[12] e con difficoltà linguistica limitata[13].

A Granada sperimentammo per la prima volta l'organizzazione di un lavoro d'équipe[14] concentrato a realizzare un montaggio, sottotitoli compresi, nel breve tempo del soggiorno sul campo, impegno dettatomi dalla volontà di superare una grossa difficoltà espressa dal partner inglese[15]: l'impossibilità di realizzare un film con i gypsy. Questi erano diffusamente in collera in seguito alla rappresentazione che di loro dava una serie televisiva recentemente diffusa[16]. Volevo quindi cercare di convincerli mostrando, anche all'insieme del partenariato, che il mio modo di realizzare era ben diverso. In un meeting che si tenne proprio a Granada alla fine di gennaio, riuscii quindi a far vedere ai partner il montaggio provvisorio appena realizzato. Il risultato fu positivo, e convinse anche Siobhan Spencer[17], rappresentante della comunità gypsy, che disse grossomodo: "se vedono questo certamente accettano".

Felicemente collaudata a Granada, quest'organizzazione del lavoro d'équipe diventò poi il metodo che cercammo di applicare, nella misura del possibile, in ogni paese.

---

[10] I paesi sono 6 ma i film sono 7 poiché 2 in Spagna.

[11] Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci Onlus di Fiesole (Firenze).

[12] Da alcuni anni svolgevo ricerche a Granada, principalmente intorno al flamenco.

[13] Valentina Bonifacio parla spagnolo avendo fatto ricerca in Paraguay per il dottorato al *Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology* (University of Manchester).

[14] Rimando al capitolo sulla ricerca in Spagna, ma sottolineo qui che a Granada l'équipe (noi due, i due ricercatori, i gitani e i rom protagonisti dei film) era molto ben affiatata e l'intenso lavoro di collaborazione si svolse in una atmosfera di grande simpatia.

[15] University of Derby, iCeGS – International Centre for Guidance Studies. Ricercatrici: Eleni Tracada e Siobhan Neary.

[16] *Gypsy Weddings*. Channel 4.

[17] *Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Groups*. Mediatrice linguistico-culturale per il partner inglese del progetto.

2. Considerazioni metodologiche

Prima di passare al racconto paese per paese, è opportuno soffermarsi su qualche aspetto metodologico, evocando brevemente alcuni principi generali cui aderisco per l'antropologia filmica[18] e quelli legati alla realizzazione di questa ricerca.

Ho acquisito le basi teoriche e metodologiche della cinematografia etnografica a Parigi, seguendo gli insegnamenti di Jean Rouch e Claudine de France[19], continuando poi, sulla base delle mie esperienze, a riflettere su alcuni aspetti della loro applicazione. Frutto del convergere di due discipline, una d'inclinazione scientifica e l'altra artistica, il film etnografico richiede di alleare "il rigore dell'inchiesta scientifica all'arte della presentazione cinematografica" (Rouch 1968: 432). Equilibrio non facile da ottenere, per cui, sottolineava Rouch, spesso il risultato è etnografico ma non cinematografico o viceversa. L'assunto di base è la confluenza nella stessa persona delle competenze necessarie alla ricerca etnologica e alla realizzazione filmica, da cui la designazione di 'antropologo–cineasta', con trattino d'unione di rigore. Lo sguardo dell'etnografo non può essere delegato, affidando le riprese ad altri, in quanto la disciplina sviluppa specifiche categorie d'interpretazione socioculturali. Altro assunto basilare del 'metodo rouchiano' – strettamente collegato al precedente – è che la macchina da presa faccia corpo con chi filma e sia da questi portata[20], permettendogli mobilità e ravvicinamento al soggetto filmato.

> Per me, quindi, l'unica maniera per filmare è muovermi con la macchina da presa, condurla là dove è più efficace, e d'improvvisare per lei un [...] balletto ove la macchina da presa diventa viva tanto quanto le persone che filma. (Rouch 1979: 63)

A questo far corpo dell'antropologo-cineasta con il suo strumento di lavoro – la 'camera', come ormai si usa correntemente chiamare – si associano le riflessioni sul suo 'status', il quale va, a sua volta, a modificare quello di chi la porta. Assimilato fin dall'epoca della mia formazione, questo concetto si è andato sviluppando nel corso dell'esperienza di ricerca in antropologia filmica:

> Durante le mie ricerche in luoghi e culture differenti, alcune interazioni inattese – denotanti un cambiamento dello status attribuitomi – hanno corroborato questa convinzione, suffragata, inoltre, da esperienze di altri ricercatori-cineasti. (Paggi 2006: 66)

> Come per ogni etnologo sul terreno, lo status dell'antropologo-cineasta nei confronti delle persone implicate nella sua ricerca varia, lo sappiamo, nel tempo e secondo le situazioni: straniero, spia, turista, ricercatore, amico, ecc. Ma si deve altresì sottolineare che la camera gioca anch'essa un ruolo nell'attribuzione di status al ricercatore che l'utilizza. Si porta spesso come esempio la possibilità per l'antropologo-cineasta di infrangere i divieti socioculturali, soprattutto in termini di posizionamento nello spazio. La camera permette così una prossimità dello sguardo che rende potente l'osservazione del reale e la sua rappresentazione. (Paggi 2013: 5)

Valentina Bonifacio collega lo status ambiguo della camera alle riflessioni di Bruno Latour sull'oggetto come *actant*:

> Mentre nella prima intervista mi percepivo come l'interlocutrice di Violante e la presenza della camera era solo accessoria, nella seconda si è prodotto esattamente l'inverso: la camera cessava di essere un oggetto per diventare un 'attore' (Latour 2005), un 'quasi-soggetto' che rappresentava metonimicamente tutte le persone che Violante immaginava come possibili spettatori dall'altra parte dell'obiettivo. Lo status della camera era ben diverso dal mio. (Bonifacio 2013: 15)

Ancor più che altri ambiti del cinema documentario, il film etnografico è intrinsecamente legato alla fase delle riprese, durante la ricerca sul campo quindi, nelle quali iscrive una descrizione che è già in sé interpretazione poiché "l'antropologo-cineasta filma mentre osserva, ed è questa selezione interpretativa del reale che possiamo apprezzare nelle registrazioni e poi, ulteriormente elaborata, nel film" (Paggi 2006: 66).

---

[18] Con questa denominazione – che preferisce a quella di antropologa visiva – Claudine de France (1981; 1994; 1996) sostiene la genesi di una nuova disciplina.

[19] Dal 1976, esiste all'università di Paris X-Nanterre, oggi Paris Ouest-Nanterre La Défense, un insegnamento dedicato al cinema-etnografico.

[20] Camera a mano, evitando quindi l'appoggio su un supporto fisso, come un cavalletto.

Foto 1: Silvia Paggi filma in Italia. Foto di Valentina Bonifacio, 2013.

Foto 2: Valentina Bonifacio filma in Ungheria. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

La pratica dell'antropologia filmica apporta cambiamenti alla metodologia di base dell'etnografia, l'osservazione partecipante, da un lato trasformando sensibilmente l'osservazione stessa dell'etnografo, e dall'altro implicando nella realizzazione filmica le persone filmate, partecipazione che non solo è, come dice Luc de Heusch, "conforme alle tecniche tradizionali dell'osservazione etnografica" (De Heusch 1962: 23), ma di per sé inevitabile, quali che siano le forme, più o meno consapevoli, che assume.

> In antropologia filmica, la realizzazione è sempre un costruire insieme, una cooperazione tra filmante e filmato. La scelta dell'antropologo-cineasta di non dirigere gli attori del processo osservato rende ancor più determinante il peso dell'auto-messa in scena[21] spontanea delle persone filmate. (Paggi 2006: 67)

Insomma, il film etnografico risulta sempre dall'incontro di "due messe in scena: quella dell'antropologo-cineasta e quella delle persone filmate" (Paggi 2015: 100). L'analisi dell'auto-messa in scena equivale a quella dell'evento che si vuole 'etnografare', ma filmandolo s'introduce altresì la presenza dello spettatore, cosicché l'etnologo-cineasta

> deve far fronte all'immediatezza di una scrittura cinematografica che è allo stesso tempo comunicazione etnografica, benché possa in seguito modificarla parzialmente e arricchirla in fase di montaggio. (Paggi 2016: 413)

Ed è proprio a questo lavoro sul terreno stesso della ricerca che Rouch attribuisce la specificità del 'cineasta-etnografo', come qui lo chiama:

> In effetti, è questo lavoro sul terreno stesso a costituire la specificità dell'approccio del cineasta-etnografo poiché, invece di elaborare al ritorno dal campo la redazione delle sue note, deve, pena il fallimento, tentarne la sintesi al momento stesso dell'osservazione, ossia elaborare la sua narrazione cinematografica, riorientarla o confermarla, di fronte all'evento stesso. (Rouch 1979: 64)

Aderisco anche all'idea che una delle funzioni principali del film etnografico è quella di "descrivere ciò di cui il linguaggio rende difficilmente conto" (De France 1989: 5). Pertanto, per le mie ricerche in antropologia filmica privilegio, di solito, pratiche per le quali l'osservazione visiva sia rilevante, adottandone conseguentemente i modi di realizzazione.

La diffidenza della disciplina, in generale, verso il film etnografico ha fatto sì che in antropologia visiva il dibattito sull'uso della parola arrivi precocemente. Basti ricordare la ben nota critica di Margaret Mead (1980 trad. it.) per le difficoltà che incontra l'antropologia visiva in una disciplina verbale, e le ripercussioni epistemologiche sviluppate da Claudine de France che mostrano come l'insieme della ricerca etnografica tenda a subordinarsi al modo usuale di comunicazione, basato sul linguaggio, orale e scritto: "Al limite, l'etnologo conserva della propria osservazione solo ciò che può essere facilmente comunicabile con la parola e/o la scrittura" (De France 1979: 142). La più forte critica all'uso della camera nella ricerca etnografica è legata al problema della profilmia[22]. Molto è già stato detto sull'argomento e, anche in questo caso, la critica ha portato antropologi visivi, o cineasti documentaristi vicini ai metodi della disciplina, a riflettere simmetricamente sull'impatto dell'etnografo senza la camera sulla realtà indagata, i più costatando come questo che possa anche essere più rilevante.

> Direi che a volte le persone si comportano più naturalmente quando sono filmate che in presenza di un osservatore ordinario. Un uomo con una cinepresa ha un evidente lavoro da compiere, ossia filmare. (MacDougall 1979: 94)

Ridurre e controllare le modificazioni profilmiche, ma anche quelle dell'osservazione diretta, è comunque un obiettivo della ricerca etnografica. Ho particolarmente associato queste riflessioni a quelle sull'uso della parola − interviste, dialoghi − e alla comunicazione verbale dell'antropologo-cineasta con le persone filmate[23]. Data la sua importanza nella ricerca etnografica, mi ha innanzitutto sollecitato lo

---

[21] Nozione introdotta da Claudine de France (1989: 367–368). Ho tradotto la definizione in italiano (Paggi 2006: 68 e 2016: 418).

[22] Modificazioni nel comportamento delle persone filmate dovute alla presenza della camera. Ne dà la definizione Claudine de France (1989: 373) e l'ho tradotta in italiano (Paggi 2006: 67 e 2016: 418).

[23] Ho raccontato in uno scritto in italiano (Paggi 2015) il percorso di esperienze, in vari terreni, nel quale sono maturati gli assunti metodologici di cui qui riassumo qualche concetto.

statuto epistemologico dell'intervista filmata (Paggi 1993), diegetica e, al tempo stesso, profilmica, poiché causata dalla situazione di ricerca. Usualmente, il documentario etnografico integra suoni (rumori, parole, musiche) diegetici, che fanno parte della realtà filmata. L'introduzione di elementi aggiunti al montaggio (commento con voce fuori campo, musica di sottofondo) è quindi assente o moderata.

Con particolare riguardo alla configurazione che nell'intervista filmata assume la relazione filmante/filmato, la duplice messa in scena influenza fortemente la significazione che ne riceverà lo spettatore, e tra le varie forme in cui può attuarsi, quella con la mediazione d'interpreti pone particolari difficoltà, che l'etnografia d'altronde ben conosce.

> Il ruolo dell'interprete etnografico è, lo sappiamo, particolarmente arduo ma in antropologia filmica presenta anche aspetti specifici. Nel caso dell'intervista, si pone innanzitutto il problema della traduzione immediata in modo che l'antropologo possa seguire, se non dirigere, il discorso. (Paggi 2015: 104)

Oltre a quelle inerenti all'intervista, altre forme di profilmia verbale sorgevano tra i protagonisti delle attività filmate: assenza di scambi di parole – una forma di autocensura – oppure, al contrario, un surplus di auto-commento spontaneo, in quanto non da me sollecitato. Quando invece mi trovavo da sola a filmare in una situazione d'incompetenza linguistica, queste forme di profilmia non si manifestavano. Andavo così sperimentando i vantaggi dell'assenza di comunicazione verbale nella relazione filmante/filmato, per la quale risultavano limitati anche i comportamenti profilmici legati al fare, e non soltanto al dire: "non si dedicherà molta attenzione a un ricercatore non solo occupato a filmare ma col quale non si può dialogare, e non solo perché non lo richiede ma anche in ragione della barriera linguistica" (Paggi 2015: 105).

La parola è tutt'altro che assente nelle riprese così realizzate, anzi, "è ritrovata in tutto il suo spessore dialogante della vita quotidiana" (Paggi 2015: 106). Una sorta di patto metodologico di collaborazione s'instaura, più o meno tacitamente, tra l'antropologo-cineasta e le persone filmate, in conseguenza del quale diventa però difficile, o può indurre a confusione, passare da un tipo di relazione filmante/filmato all'altro. "Uno degli aspetti più delicati mi è apparso quello di come poter mischiare e dosare i diversi approcci facendo in modo che la relazione filmante/filmato non incorra in situazioni contraddittorie" (Paggi 2015: 106).

Anche se in genere, conseguentemente agli assunti metodologici esposti, faccio ricerca filmica preferibilmente da sola, lavorare in équipe, come nel caso della presente ricerca, presenta indubbiamente altri vantaggi[24]. La collaborazione implica però, inevitabilmente, un diverso equilibrio anche a livello della metodologia della ricerca e realizzazione filmica. Una variante essenziale è stata, in questo caso, quella dell'ampio ricorso alle interviste e la loro funzione di filo conduttore narrativo nei film montati[25]. L'intervista prende così il ruolo del commento, sotto forma di 'auto-commento': "Anche se spesso montata fuori campo, la voce 'off' diventa 'in' poiché il soggetto parlante è integrato alla diegesi del film" (Paggi 2015: 99).

Ho comunque introdotto alcune sequenze d'osservazione senza la mediazione della parola, filmando qualche attività quotidiana o festiva in ambito domestico.

I fattori legati alla comunicazione verbale e alla sua traduzione sono quindi fortemente presenti in questa ricerca, variando in ogni paese in funzione delle competenze linguistiche: nostre, dei ricercatori con cui lavoravamo e dei mediatori culturali. Bisogna però aggiungere che Leonardo Piasere, coordinatore scientifico del progetto[26], aveva saggiamente costruito un partenariato con larga presenza di ricercatori di lingua italiana.

La tecnica di ripresa utilizzata è un altro elemento che incide sulla metodologia e sul risultato. Fin dalle mie prime esperienze, considero la videografia leggera, ora digitale, come la più adatta alle esigenze della ricerca etnografica e alla mobilità della camera a mano. Per questa ricerca, avevamo in uso due videocamere mini-DV: la Canon XL1, che utilizzavo già da nove anni, e l'ancor più leggera Sony di

---

[24] Alcuni dei quali avevo già avuto modo di sperimentare in precedenti ricerche in collaborazione con antropologi, e anche storici, avvantaggiandomi delle loro competenze, su terreni comunque più circoscritti di quello multi-situato di questa ricerca.
[25] Non ero comunque alle prime prove. L'esempio più pertinente è il mio film *Civitella 1944-1994*, interamente costruito sulla memoria dei protagonisti del massacro.
[26] Partner italiano con il Centro di Ricerche Etnografiche e di Antropologia applicata 'Francesca Cappelletto' (CREAa), Università di Verona. Ricercatore associato al progetto: Virgilio Mosé Carrara Sutour.

Valentina. Nessuna delle due era ad alta definizione[27], per cui all'inizio abbiamo vagliato, ma velocemente scartato, la possibilità di usare la macchina fotografica, alla quale, però, io non mi adatto come strumento di ripresa filmica[28], e che comunque presenta seri problemi per l'audio. Per quest'ultimo, anche se a volte l'abbiamo fatto, adibire una di noi alla presa del suono con microfono su asta si è rivelata, come spesso, cosa assai delicata, ingombrante e quindi causa di un surplus di profilmia. In definitiva, rinunciando all'alta definizione, abbiamo fatto le riprese con le due videocamere, usate alternativamente per darsi il cambio, o contemporaneamente per favorire il montaggio, soprattutto delle interviste.

3. Italia[29]

La ricerca di antropologia visiva in Italia si è svolta nel maggio del 2013, con un'aggiunta in luglio per intervistare i ricercatori italiani[30]. Questa necessità era dettata dalla volontà di chiarire il quadro critico delle politiche abitative in questione, che non emergeva chiaramente dalle interviste effettuate con i rom. Allo stesso tempo, per il montaggio del film, abbiamo preso alcune immagini dal ricco archivio fotografico della Fondazione Michelucci. Un altro incontro con Solimano e Tosi Cambini si svolse in seguito a Nizza, per l'osservazione differita dei materiali filmati e l'ideazione del film poi realizzato: *Are we going beyond nomad camps? Housing issues of Roma in Tuscany*[31].

Durante il terreno di maggio in Toscana filmiamo diverse situazioni abitative di rom emigrati a Firenze e poi un altro caso a San Giuliano Terme, vicino a Pisa. A Firenze, oltre alla situazione abitativa del Poderaccio di cui parlo qui di seguito, abbiamo visitato famiglie che hanno ottenuto l'accesso agli alloggi popolari, in appartamento o nelle casette del quartiere Guarlone, progettate dalla Fondazione Michelucci. Anche se necessariamente costruite in economia, queste costituiscono un'esperienza piuttosto positiva. Gli abitanti, tutti rom, lamentano qualche infiltrazione d'umidità e la mancanza di spazio, perché le famiglie sono numerose. Massimo Colombo racconta l'ideazione di questo progetto abitativo:

> Quando ci siamo confrontati con la realizzazione progettuale di quest'area, ci siamo un po' rifatti a un percorso di coinvolgimento degli stessi rom, centrato sulle loro esigenze, soprattutto su una lettura condivisa di quelle che potevano essere le modalità dell'abitare. Quindi, pur nel rispetto della normativa urbanistica, nella progettazione delle case abbiamo considerato alcuni fattori: in particolare, la necessità di avere degli spazi aperti che siano, allo stesso tempo, 'continuazione' della propria casa.

Dal punto di vista della comunicazione linguistica, a Firenze i rom, arrivati da molti anni, parlano bene italiano o comunque comprensibilmente. I rom filmati nel pisano, invece, sono in Italia da poco e solo alcuni cominciano a padroneggiare la lingua. Non ne avevamo altre in comune, né avevamo un interprete quando ci siamo recate sul posto.

3.1. Firenze – Poderaccio

Ho letto che quest'anno il Poderaccio è stato smantellato. Spero che i suoi abitanti siano stati ben rialloggiati. Nel 2013 la situazione non era brillante, anche se per molti di loro, rom emigrati principalmente da Macedonia e Kosovo, rappresentava un netto miglioramento rispetto ai campi nomadi. La storia del Poderaccio è abbastanza conosciuta, perlomeno in Italia. Così la riassume Nicola Solimano:

> In questo momento, il Poderaccio rappresenta l'esito parziale di un processo incompiuto di superamento dei campi nomadi fiorentini. Il Poderaccio sorge nel luogo in cui fu costituito uno dei

---

[27] All'epoca, il mio laboratorio non ne disponeva e il budget del progetto non ne consentiva l'acquisizione.

[28] Riesco a registrare correttamente solo piani fissi, in contrasto con la mobilità che ricerco con la camera a mano.

[29] Per i rom in Italia, oltre al report nazionale della ricerca, rimando alle seguenti pubblicazioni: Tosi Cambini e Sidoti (2006); Tosi Cambini e Solimano (2014); Tosi Cambini (2015 e 2016); Piasere e Pontrandolfo (2016).

[30] Nicola Solimano, Sabrina Tosi Cambini e Massimo Colombo.

[31] https://youtu.be/nV2of3iinvM. Un po' lungo, il titolo di questo film rende però bene il concetto: superare i campi nomadi con diversi progetti abitativi, realizzati o in corso di realizzazione in Toscana, situazioni di cui si sono occupati i ricercatori della Fondazione Michelucci.

primi campi nomadi, all'inizio degli anni Novanta. In realtà, il Poderaccio coincideva con la parte bassa, la cosiddetta 'area golenale' di espansione dell'Arno. In quegli anni, vi furono due piccole alluvioni del fiume che toccarono quell'area, creando vari problemi. Allora il campo fu spostato su una collina, compresa sempre nell'area, che (ipotesi largamente diffusa, mai smentita dalle autorità) sarebbe formata da rifiuti ospedalieri e, quindi, dotata di un forte potere inquinante. Fu consolidata quella prima collina e, nel tempo, si realizzarono i due villaggi che sono, per definizione, 'temporanei', in quanto la natura dell'area non consente installazioni permanenti. [In seguito] Una cinquantina di famiglie del Poderaccio sono entrate in alloggi popolari. Si è così assistito a una lenta erosione, pur rimanendo il 'nocciolo duro', costituito attualmente dai due villaggi di case in legno. Su questo non esiste una prospettiva precisa. L'alternativa al Poderaccio dovrebbe porsi, anzitutto, come alternativa al luogo: ormai si è arrivati alla terza generazione e non è possibile che una popolazione sia destinata a vivere per periodi così lunghi in quelle condizioni.

Foto 3: Firenze, Poderaccio. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2013.

Mediatore linguistico-culturale, Demir Mustafa[32] sarà la nostra guida. Ha abitato, con la famiglia, per quasi dieci anni[33] al Poderaccio, prima di ottenere un appartamento. Al Poderaccio incontriamo Baba Rufat[34], capo spirituale della comunità Sufi[35], il cui percorso abitativo in Italia va dalla tenda alla roulotte in campi nomadi, fino alla casetta di legno del Poderaccio, dove vive con la famiglia. Pur riconoscendo, con gratitudine, un miglioramento, Baba Rufat lamenta la precarietà della situazione abitativa:

> Era per sette anni e ora sono nove anni. Si può dire che un villaggio corrisponda a un miglioramento di vita per il popolo rom. Siamo stati nelle roulotte e nelle baracche che ci siamo costruiti ed è stato un brutto momento. Adesso, in questo villaggio, stiamo un po' meglio, ma non è qualcosa di stabile. I tubi si rompono e il legno non è come il muro che rimane una vita. Entra acqua, entrano i topi.

---

[32] Rom macedone emigrato da più di 30 anni in Italia.
[33] Dal 1989 al 1996.
[34] Rom macedone emigrato in Italia dal 1986.
[35] Sufi-Dervisci.

Demir insiste molto sull'importanza dell'istruzione dei giovani, sottolineando il diverso atteggiamento dei ragazzi secondo la situazione abitativa. Nei campi – e per loro il Poderaccio è un campo – non superano la terza media e vengono spesso bocciati già alle elementari. Si aggiungono poi le difficoltà per trovare lavoro.

> Demir   Bisognerebbe capire perché la gente non trova lavoro; se ti chiedono dove abiti, e dici Poderaccio, non ti danno il lavoro. […] A Skopje ci sono rom che vanno all'università. Sono i campi a creare un certo atteggiamento nella gente. Chiunque entrasse qui dopo sei mesi diventa come noi. L'unica soluzione è cominciare a inserirli nelle case. […] In Jugoslavia sapevo di essere rom ma era normale. Qui, invece, è tutta un'altra cosa: 'nomade', 'zingaro'… Perché? Cos'è successo? Cos'è cambiato?

Su domanda reiterata degli abitanti del Poderaccio, la Fondazione Michelucci ha contribuito alla costruzione di una piccola moschea[36], dove abbiamo avuto la possibilità di filmare un rituale di Zikr. Noi due però siamo donne e staremo, quindi, foulard in capo, assieme alle donne, che partecipano alla cerimonia da una stanza laterale, la quale comunica con lo spazio centrale della moschea tramite una lunga apertura, occultata da una tendina. Questa, però, mi rende difficile filmare la cerimonia svolta dagli uomini, i quali dopo un po' se ne accorgono e, eccezionalmente, la scostano.

Non sono autorizzata a filmare o fotografare aggirandomi da sola nel villaggio. Capisco che è una doppia precauzione: protegge noi da eventuali rifiuti o proteste degli abitanti, e protegge loro da dinamiche interne, garantendo che non vengano dette cose che potrebbero intralciare gli appoggi politici di cui hanno bisogno. Col tempo, riesco comunque a conquistare fiducia – anche grazie ai ragazzini, la cui ostilità si converte dopo che filmo la loro partita di calcio – e circolo liberamente al Poderaccio.

Foto 4: Firenze, Poderaccio. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2013.

---

[36] Frequentata non solo dagli abitanti, data la scarsità di luoghi di culto musulmano a Firenze.

Tra i tanti problemi, c'è quello dei rifiuti e dell'accumulo d'ingombranti, portati anche da altri, in fondo alla strada. La gestione degli spazi comuni è difficile. All'interno, invece, le case sono molto pulite, come sempre tra i rom. Così lo spiega Sabrina Tosi Cambini:

> Questo degrado ambientale, che spesso purtroppo, da un punto di vista di schemi mentali, viene associato alle persone e non al luogo (che gli è stato dato in maniera coatta, è da sottolineare), sparisce nel momento in cui si entra dentro la casa. È un po' come dire: io non posso rendere migliore più di tanto questo fuori, ma curo la mia *domesticité*: tutto ciò che è legato al mio abitare.

3. 2. San Giuliano Terme (Pisa)

A San Giuliano Terme troviamo una situazione in cui il Comune sta facendo molto per accogliere degnamente e agevolare l'inserimento sociale di rom rumeni arrivati negli ultimi anni, alcuni dei quali hanno occupato un edificio in disuso di proprietà della parrocchia. Ce lo spiega Fortunata Dini[37]:

> Abbiamo cercato, con gli operatori sociali e anche la polizia municipale, di riuscire a capire quali fossero i loro percorsi e i loro progetti, perché volevamo in qualche modo intervenire per garantire un minimo di diritti, pensando anche ai minori e alle donne, tra cui alcune era in stato di gravidanza avanzata. In seguito, un certo numero di famiglie ha occupato abusivamente un edificio di proprietà di una parrocchia. [...] Siamo arrivati al punto in cui, non potendo accordare la residenza a queste famiglie nell'edificio a causa della denuncia per occupazione abusiva, daremo la residenza nella Casa comunale, ciò che permetterà loro di accedere a tutti i diritti inerenti.

Sergio Bontempelli[38] sottolinea che sin dall'inizio i rom hanno pagato le utenze, rendendo così meno tesa la relazione con la parrocchia, come conferma uno di loro:

> L'elettricità e l'acqua c'erano. Noi le consumiamo e le paghiamo. Il prete, ovviamente, non è contento che si entri in casa sua, ci ha anche denunciati alla polizia municipale… Per il momento, però, siamo tranquilli: i figli vanno a scuola, noi lavoriamo… Non diamo fastidio a nessuno.

Foto 5: San Giuliano Terme, Pisa. Foto di Valentina Bonifacio, 2013.

---

[37] Vice-sindaco e Assessora alle Pari Opportunità nel maggio 2013.
[38] Associazione Africa Insieme.

L'edificio occupato consta di diverse abitazioni. I rom hanno, a poco a poco, ammobiliato e riparato gli appartamenti, che comunque presentano molti inconvenienti: infiltrazione d'umidità, ecc. Il Comune cerca l'accordo della parrocchia per un progetto di auto-recupero dell'edificio, col contributo delle famiglie che, in compenso del lavoro svolto, potranno abitarci per un massimo di due anni.

Uno degli abitanti offre un esempio di discriminazione tramite i media d'informazione:

> Se un italiano uccide un italiano, la notizia sarà in seconda pagina; se invece lo fa uno straniero, ad esempio un rumeno o un albanese, la notizia sarà in prima pagina. Lo stesso avviene da noi: il rumeno non zingaro in seconda, mentre lo zingaro in prima pagina. Funziona così!

FOTO 6: San Giuliano Terme, Pisa. Foto di Valentina Bonifacio, 2013.

4. Spagna – Granada[39]

Nel gennaio del 2014 a Granada, il partner[40] propone di filmare due realtà differenti, quella del Sacromonte, quartiere storico d'abitazione dei gitani, e quella di una giovane coppia di rom rumeni emigrati, dando così origine a due film: *Sacromonte de ida y vuelta*[41] e *Daniel y Claudia*[42].

I due ricercatori lavorano con noi in stretta collaborazione e molta disponibilità, accompagnandoci spesso durante le riprese, Juan de Dios López López soprattutto per i gitani del Sacromonte e Giuseppe Beluschi Fabeni per i rom rumeni, i quali parlano perfettamente spagnolo, anche se tra loro sovente in *romanes*.

---

[39] Per gitani e rom in Andalusia rimando al report nazionale della ricerca e alle seguenti pubblicazioni: Beluschi Fabeni (2013); Beluschi Fabeni e López López (2014).

[40] Taller de Antropologìa y Ciencias Sociales Aplicadas (ACSA).

[41] https://vimeo.com/495543315

[42] https://vimeo.com/319185201

4. 1. Sacromonte

Foto 7-8: Granada – Sacromonte. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Nostra guida per il Sacromonte, e filo conduttore del film, è Cecilio[43], che ripercorre luoghi e storia del quartiere. Per trasmettere quella che era la sua vita quotidiana quando vi abitava, Cecilio parte dall'attiguo quartiere dell'Albaycín, centro di riferimento per l'approvvigionamento, dato che nel Sacromonte non ci sono negozi, e luogo ricco d'incontri e socialità.

All'inizio, Cecilio mette in opera un'auto-messa in scena profilmica, comportandosi come se si trattasse di un reportage televisivo. Non tarda però a capire come lavoro io ("fai come faresti di solito, non ti curare di me") e lo capisce talmente bene che faccio fatica a stargli dietro. Si stabilisce presto una buonissima armonia, per cui lui ritrova spontaneità senza peraltro ignorare (o fingere d'ignorare) la nostra presenza con la camera; segue il percorso lungo il *Camino del Monte*, raccontando ciò che ricorda della vita dei gitani nel Sacromonte, nonché le sue considerazioni ed emozioni.

Le abitazioni del Sacromonte sono *cuevas*, case scavate nel terreno che presenta zone di roccia miste ad altre di argilla e rena, configurazione chiamata 'formazione Alhambra'.

Foto 9: Ricostruzione d'interno di abitazione. *Museo cuevas Sacromonte*. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Juan Güeto[44] spiega le particolarità geo-architetturali di queste case:

> Si possono costruire le cuevas perché questo terreno è come un calcestruzzo naturale. Se le scavi in modo che il peso sia distribuito, sono resistenti. Per dargli la forma interna si utilizza l'arco semicircolare e per consolidare si usa la calce, un materiale tecnologicamente molto avanzato ma conosciuto da migliaia di anni, che trattiene lasciando respirare. La cueva deve essere ben orientata e ben ventilata. Ha il miglior sistema d'isolamento termico che esista: la terra, la montagna. La temperatura è stabile: 18 in estate e 16 in inverno, senza riscaldamento. […] Nelle cuevas si dormiva ma si viveva fuori. Si faceva vita in comune: fuori si mangiava, si lavorava, si giocava, si conversava.

---

[43] Cecilio Espejo Fernandez, gitano andaluso, mediatore linguistico-culturale.
[44] Direttore del *Museo cuevas Sacromonte*.

Foto 10: Ricostruzione di una cucina. *Museo cuevas Sacromonte*. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Cecilio mostra la fonte dell'Amapola, che era l'unico pozzo dove venivano ad approvvigionarsi gli abitanti del Sacromonte. La mancanza di elettricità contribuiva a che la gente andasse a letto di buon'ora.

> Cecilio   Questa era la nostra vita, senza acqua e senza luce. Per questo si facevano tanti figli, perché si andava a letto presto. Non c'era TV o altro divertimento, quindi: che si doveva fare? Che bello!

Cecilio vive con la famiglia al Sacromonte fino al 1963, data fatidica per lo stravolgimento del quartiere: un'alluvione si porta via quasi tutte le *cuevas* e gli abitanti vengono evacuati. Non vi torneranno più, anche perché non possedevano alcun documento di proprietà per case e terreni.

> Cecilio   L'acqua che venne giù ha trascinato via tutte le cuevas che c'erano, comprese famiglie, animali, tutto, anche alcune persone. Mio padre mi prese, mia madre prese quattro coperte e ci mettemmo a correre. Come potevamo, con l'acqua alle ginocchia. Quando vedo ciò che accade con gli tsunami, aria, acqua, vento, mi ricorda quello.

I gitani sono quindi sfollati in rifugi, tende, caserme, poi in baraccopoli, fino a che un vero e proprio quartiere, chiamato Poligono, viene costruito per accoglierli. In periferia, naturalmente, niente a che vedere col Sacromonte. Curro Albaycín[45], che poi vi è tornato ad abitare, racconta:

> Il 1963 fu un anno nefasto per il Sacromonte, fu uno sradicamento e niente fu più come prima: né noi, né gli abitanti, né il quartiere. È andato perso il modo di vivere, il modo d'imparare il flamenco, che s'imparava gli uni dagli altri, i piccoli osservando gli adulti. E il quartiere è morto. […] Tutta l'acqua che è caduta quell'anno, mi ha segnato per il resto della mia vita: la sofferenza di dover andare via da dove sei nato, di perdere i tuoi amici, di perdere la tua famiglia, tutto è scomparso. Ma ovviamente eravamo in una dittatura e invece di sistemare il quartiere, ci hanno portato in quei posti…

---

[45] Nome d'arte di Francisco Guardia Contreras.

Il Sacromonte si trasforma poi progressivamente, sorgono sempre più locali di flamenco[46] per turisti e nuove abitazioni, ristrutturate in gran parte da non granadini, che hanno comprato a buon mercato, o semplicemente occupato, ruderi di *cuevas* e terreni dismessi.

Per Cecilio, come per molti altri gitani della sua generazione, il Sacromonte è un paradiso perduto, dove si vorrebbe ritornare ad abitare, almeno per la vecchiaia. Resta comunque un punto di riferimento per tutti i gitani di Granada che vi si recano in occasioni festive o religiose.

4. 2. Daniel e Claudia

Giovani rom rumeni emigrati da una decina d'anni a Granada, Daniel e Claudia, con la figlia regolarmente scolarizzata, devono continuamente risolvere i problemi economici per mantenere il livello di vita in appartamento. Daniel raccatta ogni sorta di oggetti buttati[47] per rivenderli al mercatino dell'usato. Per questo ha bisogno di un camioncino e di un garage come deposito. Claudia guadagna un po' con lavori domestici e, per integrare, ogni tanto fa la statua nel centro di Granada.

> Daniel   Qui pago [al mese] 350€, più le spese, circa 100€ per luce e gas. Pago 100€ al mese per il garage.
> Claudia   Ci sono mesi che possiamo, ma altri no e c'indebitiamo. Io gli dico di lasciare il garage, che non riusciamo a tirare avanti.
> Daniel   Noi l'appartamento l'abbiamo tra i gagé[48], non siamo tra rom... Nessuno qui sa che io e Claudia, siamo gitani.

Li filmiamo accompagnandoli al lavoro e nella quotidianità. Per raggiungere un adeguato livello di vita emigrano, ma per il futuro sperano in un lavoro che permetta loro di stare vicino ai loro famigliari.

5. Portogallo – Coimbra[49]

La ricerca di antropologia visiva in Portogallo si è svolta tra maggio e giugno del 2014, con riprese a Coimbra e lavoro per il montaggio a Lisbona. Delle due ricercatrici, Micol Brazzabeni e Alexandra Castro, del partner[50] con cui lavoriamo, una è italiana e l'altra lo parla molto bene. A Coimbra, uno dei due mediatori linguistico-culturali, Henrique[51], parla con noi in spagnolo, l'altro, Samuel[52] no. Comunque, Alessandra è spesso con noi a Coimbra durante le riprese. A intuito, capisco un po' il portoghese, ma cercando di parlarlo mi sono a volte infilata in bizzarri malintesi. A Coimbra abbiamo filmato diverse situazioni abitative, ma il perno su cui si è concentrato anche il film realizzato, *Quando saímos?*[53], è il *Centro de Estágio Habitacional*[54].

Incontriamo dapprima Bruno e Osvaldo[55], responsabili dell'*Associação Social Recreativa Cultural Cigana*, che ci spiegano la situazione dei ciganos a Coimbra, e in particolare dell'abitare nel *Bairro da Rosa*, che loro designano come 'quartiere sociale', un quartiere periferico di case popolari. Innanzitutto, tengono a distinguere i ciganos che chiamano portoghesi, "che sono già, possiamo dire, in un processo d'inclusione", da altre comunità rom, provenienti, ad esempio, dalla Romania ma anche dalla vicina Spagna, con cui dicono di non avere grandi rapporti "perché le tradizioni sono molto diverse". Una delle principali finalità dell'associazione è proprio quella di facilitare il processo d'inclusione[56] dei ciganos

---

[46] Spesso *zambra* a Granada.

[47] *Chatarra*, dice lui: rottami, spazzatura.

[48] Denominazione *romanes* per i non-rom. I gitani utilizzano il termine *payos*.

[49] Per i ciganos portoghesi rimando al report nazionale della ricerca e alle seguenti pubblicazioni: Machado (1994); Castro (2010); Brazzabeni (2012).

[50] Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia (CRIA).

[51] Henrique Cardoso Barbosa.

[52] Samuel Gonçalves.

[53] https://youtu.be/C9UoOVXGiFs

[54] Si potrebbe tradurre con *Centro di tirocinio abitativo*.

[55] Bruno Gonçalves (National delegate in the ROMED Programme, Council of Europe) e Osvaldo Grilo (Presidente dell'Associazione).

[56] Conservo il termine usato da loro.

portoghesi, considerando la scolarizzazione come un fattore prioritario, ma sottolineando al tempo stesso che il sistema educativo nazionale dovrebbe tener conto delle diversità culturali.

> Bruno   Facilitare l'inclusione è molto difficile. Devi avere una serie di condizioni, devi avere una rete: una buona istruzione, una buona salute, un buon alloggio, questo è tutto connesso. L'inclusione non può apparire in un batter d'occhio. […] Dato che la scuola non è una priorità per la maggior parte delle famiglie cigane, cerchiamo di colmare il divario tra le famiglie e la scuola. Non possiamo però vivere in un sistema d'insegnamento predisposto solo per una società non cigana. Oggi il Portogallo è un paese multiculturale. La scuola deve anche adattarsi alle diverse culture che esistono nel paese.

Secondo Bruno, almeno il settanta per cento della popolazione cigana che vive nei quartieri sociali non è contenta: "Non sono contenti di vivere in un quartiere complicato che, se stanno cercando lavoro, basta dire che vivono qui e non hanno più un lavoro". Anche qui, come in Italia, emerge il problema che lega le condizioni abitative, ma anche quelle identitarie come riferiranno altri intervistati, alla possibilità di trovare lavoro.

5. 1. *Centro de Estágio Habitacional* (detto *'Bolão'*)

Al *Centro de estágio habitacional* vengono, per un certo periodo, rialloggiate famiglie che devono imparare ad abitare correttamente, prima di poter accedere all'attribuzione di un appartamento. Come nel caso del Poderaccio a Firenze, si tratta di casette prefabbricate di legno, undici unità abitative. In un prefabbricato attinente, un'équipe stabile – due mediatrici socioculturali e una psicologa[57] – assiste gli abitanti con attività di sostegno, principalmente rivolte a donne e bambini: appoggio scolare, animazione, alfabetizzazione, atelier di cucito, di riadattamento del mobilio, ecc., coordinando anche i lavori di pulizia degli spazi comuni.

FOTO 11: Coimbra – *Centro de estàgio habitacional 'Bolão'*. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

---

[57] Maria Teresa Pechincha, Catarina Gralheiro e Sónia Ferreira.

FOTO 12-13: Coimbra − *Centro de estàgio habitacional 'Bolão'*. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

Foto 14: Coimbra – *Centro de estàgio habitacional 'Bolão'*. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

Durante un'intervista con le responsabili del Comune, chiedo provocatoriamente se questo centro è stato progettato per i ciganos, suscitando una decisa reazione di diniego di questa discriminazione. Spiegano che, siccome si accolgono famiglie molto povere e socialmente disastrate, ne risulta una larga (di fatto unica) presenza di ciganos.

Dice Rosa Maria Santos[58]:

> Quando si è posto il problema di rialloggiare undici famiglie di etnia cigana, il Comune ha ritenuto che la migliore soluzione non fosse quella di metterli nei quartieri municipali, e abbiamo cominciato a pensare al tipo di progetto che potesse essere il più adeguato per queste famiglie. Così è nato questo Centro.

Analizzando la lista dei residenti al *Centro de estágio habitacional,* emerge una composizione sociale in cui la responsabilità del nucleo familiare ricade sulle donne, con bambini e minori a carico. Infatti, con una sola eccezione, il capofamiglia è una donna. Su 47 abitanti 27 sono minori e gli uomini adulti sono solo 7, tra cui il più anziano ha 34 anni. Molti uomini sembrano quindi assenti, almeno ufficialmente, dal nucleo di residenza. Le donne sopra i 18 anni sono 12 e la più anziana ha 57 anni, ma la fascia d'età dai 30 ai 50 anni è quasi (2) inesistente. Tra le 10 capofamiglia, 4 ventenni (tra 20 e 26 anni) risultano avere un compagno e dei figli, mentre per le cinquantenni 1 è da sola, le altre 2 sono nonne o zie, che vivono con nipoti e/o figli. Le 3 dichiarate come nuore hanno 18, 20 e 22 anni. Quasi tutti i bimbi fino a 11 anni hanno una scolarizzazione regolare, mentre in seguito sono in ritardo o hanno abbandonato.

5. 2. Altre testimonianze di discriminazioni

Visitiamo anche alcune famiglie che ora vivono in appartamento dopo essere passate per il Bolão, il che implica che provenivano da un abitato più che disagevole e precario. Incontrando Paulinha e Luis[59] nella loro casa attuale non si sospetta il dramma che hanno vissuto quando vivevano in una baraccopoli,

---

[58] Direttrice del *Dipartimento di Educazione e Sviluppo Sociale e Culturale* del Comune di Coimbra.
[59] Paula e Luis Afonso. La chiamano Paulinha per distinguerla dalla madre, Paula Dimas, da cui pure ci siamo recate.

e di cui mi avevano preliminarmente parlato Henrique e Alessandra, come riporta il mio diario: "Paula e Luis sono quelli a cui è morto il primo figlio sotto il treno. Vivevano in una baracca vicino alla ferrovia, lei aveva il bambino in braccio mentre camminava lungo i binari. Il soffio del treno le ha portato via il bambino"[60]. Ritroveremo questo dramma del treno in una testimonianza in Romania.

Paulinha spiega la discriminazione cui deve assoggettarsi per continuare a lavorare: "Dove lavoro nessuno sa che sono cigana, che sono di etnia cigana. Non lo dico perché posso perdere il posto". Per lo stesso motivo, Paulinha ha anche dovuto, molto malvolentieri, tagliarsi i lunghi capelli. Per far capire com'è difficile per un cigano lavorare in Portogallo, Henrique mi suggerisce addirittura di occultarle il viso nel montaggio. Nel film, Paulhina non vi apparirà affatto, se ne sentirà solo la voce.

Incontriamo gli zii[61] e la madre[62] di Samuel, l'altro mediatore culturale, mentre vendono in un mercatino del centro di Coimbra. Raccontando le loro peripezie abitative e di come hanno a lungo vissuto in baracche, senza luce né acqua, prima di riuscire ad avere un appartamento, parlano chiaramente di discriminazione.

Valdemar	Vivevamo in baracche perché il governo di Salazar non ci dava le case. Erano [la regola era di stare solo] 24 ore nello stesso posto. Salazar era un razzista di prim'ordine!
Júlia	Discriminazione! Per quanto un cigano sia serio [onesto], siamo sempre banditi per chi non è cigano. Si sospetta sempre di un cigano, per quanto serio sia.
Irene	Penso che il Bolão non è molto buono. Siccome sono solo prefabbricati, non è una [vera] casa, penso che quelle persone si debbano sentire discriminate. Perché danno le case ad alcuni e ad altri no? Le persone devono convivere le une con le altre.

6. Ungheria – Velény[63]

La ricerca di antropologia visiva in Ungheria si è svolta nel luglio del 2014, con riprese a Velény (Pécs) e lavoro per il montaggio a Budapest, dando origine al film *Living in Velény*[64].

Il partner[65] ha incluso la giovane ricercatrice Kitti Baracsi[66] che parla italiano, tra le varie lingue che padroneggia, compresa quella dei rom boyash[67] che filmiamo. Hanno anche avuto la gentilezza di trovare un mediatore linguistico-culturale che parla francese con me, Zoli[68], nostra guida a Velény, villaggio misto di rom e non.

I rom (cigány) boyash incontrati nel villaggio usano tutti distinguere terminologicamente loro stessi, i cigány (che sono ungheresi) dagli altri, gli 'ungheresi' detti anche 'contadini'.

Il diario annota alcuni aspetti per i cigány di Velény che Zoli mi riassume preliminarmente:

Zoli dice che sono tutti poveri, ma molte case, anche dei rom, sono di proprietà, costruite con gli aiuti sociali. Molti rom sono analfabeti. I rom non amano il giardino, l'orto, mentre gli ungheresi sì. […] Molti non lavorano e vivono di sussidi di disoccupazione. Prima lavoravano in fabbrica o in miniera a Pécs. Anche uranio. Ora lavorano come muratori o come giornalieri in campagna. I giovani vanno a studiare a Pécs. [69]

Questo 'prima', che molti hanno usato nelle interviste, indica il periodo socialista cui segue, dal 1989, la fase di democratizzazione del paese, definita di 'transizione'.

Jani[70]	Ho lavorato alla cooperativa edile per dodici anni, ho fatto lavori fisicamente pesanti, come con la scavatrice a terra, ma anche per sostituire braccianti e muratori che a volte non venivano.

---

[60] Paggi, diario del 31-05-2014.
[61] Valdemar Maia e Júlia Mafra.
[62] Irene Mafra.
[63] Per i cigány ungheresi rimando al report nazionale della ricerca e a Szalai 2014.
[64] https://youtu.be/VXBxPrRYKVs
[65] Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Neveléstudomány Intézet Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék. Riercatori: Judit Balatonyi, Tibor Cserti Csapó, Anna Orsós, Mónica Balázsovics.
[66] Nel suo testo del 2016 mostra come l'immaginario culturale insito nei processi educativi influisce sulla formazione degli studenti rom.
[67] Il boyash è una lingua latina con poche parole in comune col *romanes*.
[68] Zoltán Orsos. 22 anni, studiava legge all'università di Pécs.
[69] Paggi, diario del 8-7-14.
[70] János Zentai.

Zoli   E perché hai smesso di lavorare?

Jani   Perché quando è arrivata la transizione ho pensato bene di prendere la pensione d'invalidità. Se non lo avessi fatto, ora non avrei una pensione. Da allora sono a casa. Non posso lavorare, da un lato per i miei problemi di salute, ma dall'altro perché dovrei pagare delle tasse, lavorando in più della pensione d'invalidità. Per me non ha senso: mi affatico a lavorare e non voglio pagare per farlo. La pensione d'invalidità sono pochi soldi ma se lavoro devo pagare delle tasse. Non ha alcun senso, assolutamente.

Foto 15: Una casa a Velény. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Rispondendo sulla differenza di vita prima e ora, Jani mette l'accento sul rincaro esponenziale del costo della vita:[71]

> Qui la gente vive dall'oggi al domani. Qui se qualcuno non può lavorare o avere aiuti, muore. Sono sepolti e basta. Adesso 2000 fiorini non bastano per vivere sul luogo di lavoro. Primo, pagare l'autobus, perché non è sicuro che lo finanzi l'azienda; secondo, comprare cibo e sigarette, per un costo di almeno 1000 fiorini; alla fine forse restano 100-150 fiorini. Così la gente vegeta, conservata in aceto e acido salicilico, oppure muore, soprattutto in questo piccolo paese. […]
> Era molto meglio ai tempi di Kádár che adesso, in questa sporca epoca in cui ci troviamo. Ora ci sono diecimila o centomila nelle classi alte e uno o due milioni di poveri, molto poveri. Alcuni non hanno neanche una casa o un appartamento. All'epoca di Kádár la gente neanche s'immaginava di dover vivere sotto i ponti o di non trovare lavoro. Anzi, ti punivano se non avevi un lavoro.

La coabitazione tra le due componenti, cigány e non, del villaggio non pare fonte di particolari problemi, ma le relazioni sono spesso superficiali.

Jani   Per lo più va bene: io non parlo con loro e loro non parlano con me. Non ho niente a che fare col loro staff [gruppo] né loro col mio. Non intendo né rubare né litigare. Quindi cosa avrebbero da ridire?

---

[71] Nel 2014, 1 euro equivale a 300 fiorini ungheresi (HUF o Forint).

Il diario annota alcune osservazioni e considerazioni sullo stato della casa di Jani:

> I segni della povertà sono chiari, ma anche quelli, che non vanno per forza assieme, di disordine e sporcizia. Nella stanza dell'accumulo, che sembra più un deposito che altro, non ci si rigira. Kitti la classifica nella tipologia della stanza 'felice' che si usa qui come in Romania. Una stanza che non viene abitata, ma in cui si tengono le cose preziose.[72]

Foto 16: Velény, casa di Jani. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

La nonna di Zoli, Rozália [73], racconta il suo arrivo a Velény, dove vive da più di 30 anni:

Rozália   Veniamo da Dobina, che era un insediamento per cigány. Non erano buone condizioni: senza elettricità né gas, niente. Vivevamo poveramente, cuocendo all'esterno, su un aggeggio a tre piedi, pentole e forno a legna, perché non avevamo il gas. Tutto è cambiato quando abbiamo comprato questa vecchia casa, che era già meglio dell'insediamento per cigány all'esterno. Poi quando è arrivata la possibilità di edificare con le sovvenzioni della szocpol[74], abbiamo colto anche quest'opportunità e costruito questa nuova casa, che è migliore, più comoda.

Zoli   E a Dobina, com'erano le relazioni con la gente?

Rozália   C'era molta solidarietà, eravamo tutti poveri e ci aiutavamo a vicenda. Si lavorava a giornata, quando ci dicevano che c'era un'opportunità; la gente andava a zappare negli orti, o per i lavori quotidiani nelle case. Era così. Ed eravamo solidali perché eravamo tutti poveri.

---

[72] Paggi, diario del 9-7-14.
[73] Rozália Orsós Jánosné Kalányos.
[74] Programma di aiuti per la costruzione di alloggi, creato nel 1995.

Dopo la visita alla nonna di Zoli, il mio diario riporta:

> Dalla nonna di Zoli da segnalare il rapporto distaccato, almeno in nostra presenza, con la nuora[75], o amichetta del nipote[76]. Questa lava a mano, centrifuga, stende. Chiedo perché non hanno la lavatrice, dice (la nonna) che è rotta… da tre anni!
> Zoli dice che loro [della sua famiglia] sono sì boyash, come tutti gli altri del villaggio (e come la maggior parte in questa regione, dice Kitti) però sono anche diversi: lavorano, studiano. Insomma, sono molto più integrati. Infatti, la casa del padre è in mezzo a quella degli 'ungheresi' e solo quella della nonna si trova nel quartiere con alta concentrazione di cigány.[77]

FOTO 17: Velény, casa di Rozália. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

I genitori di Zoli sono separati e lui quando è a Velény abita nella casa del padre, Sandor[78], dove vediamo spesso anche la figlia sposata, Csilla[79] e le nipoti[80], che abitano anche loro nel villaggio. Questa casa diventa il nostro punto d'appoggio e la famiglia di Zoli ci aiuterà a proseguire nelle riprese che, a un certo momento, incontrano impreviste difficoltà con le autorità locali che il diario così riporta:

> Kitti mi parla delle difficoltà incontrate dal sindaco quando parla della nostra presenza a non so chi di amministrativo, a lui gerarchicamente superiore. Di botto vogliono controllarci, sapere da chi andiamo, ottenere la loro autorizzazione. Pare abbiano paura che la gente con noi parli in maniera negativa degli amministratori. Quando Kitti gli dice che vogliamo soprattutto filmare nelle case la vita quotidiana, senza scambi di parole con noi, allora si tranquillizzano. Non padroneggiando la lingua, controllo molto poco e dipendo dalla mediazione di Kitti e Zoli.[81]
> Difatti oggi buca col sindaco. Io non c'ero perché riprendevo la preparazione del (nostro) pranzo a casa del padre di Zoli, con sua sorella, ma pare che il sindaco non voglia rilasciare alcuna intervista.

---

[75] Melánia Orsós.
[76] Non si tratta di Zoli ma di un altro nipote che viveva in casa con lei.
[77] Paggi, diario del 9-7-14.
[78] Sandor Orsós.
[79] Csilla Vörösvári Richárdné Orsós.
[80] Viktória Vörösvári e Ramóna Vörösvári .
[81] Paggi, diario del 9-7-14.

[…] In casa tutto armonioso tra padre, figlia, nipoti e la compagna[82] del padre. Ero sola, quindi loro agivano e parlavano liberamente[83]. La casa qui è carina, più che decente, anche se nel lavandino l'acqua cola in un secchio[84], e ci sono gli apparecchi centrifuga per i panni.[85]

FOTO 18: Velény, casa di Csilla. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Sandor ci introduce poi in casa di Irénke[86], che vive con due figli adulti, ma solo uno[87] era presente al momento delle riprese. La casa è povera ma ordinata, con stoffe, tappeti, immagini e molti soprammobili, come sempre negli arredamenti di queste abitazioni. Zoli mi spiega che la casa era in cattivo stato e Irénke l'ha rinnovata completamente. Vi abita da più di vent'anni, non paga l'affitto perché è della municipalità e riceve anche 2000 Forints al mese dallo Stato, così può pagare l'elettricità e l'acqua. Il marito è morto da dodici anni e Irénke percepisce la pensione da vedova. Mostra a Sandor la carta di credito che ha ricevuto da due mesi: "Con questa posso prelevare i soldi e pagare ogni cosa! Lo sai quanto costa se la perdo? 40000-50000 Forints!".

Annoto nel diario le migliorie che Irenke progetta per la casa e i costi degli elettrodomestici che è riuscita a comprare negli ultimi tempi:

Ora Irénke vuole dipingere i muri di giallo e comprare la centrifuga. Ha da poco cambiato la cucina (comprata usata per 4000 Fts + 2000 Fts di riparazione) di cui è molto contenta: "Il forno è grande, ci sta un maiale!". Il frigorifero l'ha pagato 15000 Fts.[88]

In una lunga intervista a casa sua, Sandor ci parla dei cambiamenti sopravvenuti negli ultimi trent'anni per i cigány a Velény e dell'accoglienza da parte dei non cigány.

---

[82] Ibolya Keresztes. Viveva lì anche sua figlia di 17 anni.
[83] Non c'erano interpreti e sanno che non capisco la loro lingua. Cf. Considerazioni metodologiche.
[84] Quello che immediatamente ho percepito come un guasto nello scarico può, invece, essere un'attenzione ecologica al non spreco dell'acqua.
[85] Paggi, diario del 10-7-14.
[86] Irénke Orsós Sandorné Sudár.
[87] Pál Sudár.
[88] Paggi, diario del 11-7-14.

| Sandor | Fino a qualche tempo fa, i cigány vivevano in luoghi di campagna per cigány. Ci fu un presidente del consiglio che fece molto per le famiglie cigány. Quest'uomo ci ha aiutato parecchio, la mia famiglia, mio padre e mio nonno. Ci ha aiutato con soldi e case, alla mia famiglia ha dato denaro e una casa. Questo è successo più o meno trent'anni fa. […] Quando siamo arrivati, eravamo davvero contenti perché gli abitanti del villaggio, gli ungheresi, ci hanno accolto. Quando siamo venuti qui nel villaggio abbiamo fatto tutto assieme. Quando gli ungheresi hanno visto che non rubavamo e che non mentivamo ci hanno accettato meglio. Grazie a Dio, tutti volevano evolvere e ci siamo impegnati a costruire le case. Rom e ungheresi volevano aiutarsi a vicenda. |
| | E poi è arrivato il cambiamento di sistema. C'erano gli aiuti sociali, i sindaci dei villaggi e i rappresentanti [delle minoranze]. Ho fatto parte per diciassette anni della municipalità etnica e andando alle riunioni ho saputo delle possibilità del szocpol. |

Quella di Sandor è la prima casa costruita a Velény con queste sovvenzioni pubbliche. Per pagare l'architetto dovettero comunque vendere molte cose, compresi i vitelli. Costruita la casa, l'esempio è stato seguito soprattutto dai cigány.

| Sandor | Più che altro si trattava di famiglie cigány, perché non molti ungheresi hanno costruito le case. Oggigiorno, la situazione è che quasi tutte le famiglie cigány hanno una casa nuova. |

L'ultima domenica siamo invitate a pranzo in casa di Csilla[89], la sorella di Zoli, e c'è aria di festa. Ci impegniamo a filmare la domesticità e la culinaria. Kitti e Valentina saranno poi sottoposte a una trasformazione secondo l'estetica festiva – trucco, acconciatura, vestiti, gioielli – cui seguirà un reportage fotografico di moda con le bambine. Come (quasi) sempre con queste popolazioni, il divertimento è di casa.

7. Inghilterra – Checkley[90]

La ricerca in Inghilterra si è svolta tra fine luglio e inizio agosto del 2014, con riprese a Checkley e lavoro per il montaggio a Derby. Valentina parla inglese, io riesco a seguire l'insieme e comunque Eleni[91], la ricercatrice, parla italiano.

Siobhan Spencer, come abbiamo già visto mediatrice linguistico-culturale, ci introduce dapprima nella sede della *Gypsy Liaison Groups* per visionare il montaggio sul Sacromonte di Granada che, come sperato, convince Johanna[92] ad autorizzare le riprese: seguiremo le sue peripezie per lottare contro l'espulsione della sua famiglia dal terreno dove vive, a Checkley. Ne risulta il film *Johanna's tribulations*[93].

Emergono da subito questioni che riguardano le regole di proprietà per case e terreni, strettamente collegate allo status dei gypsy nel Regno Unito, problematiche che mi paiono particolarmente intricate, come annoto nel diario:

Eppure sono sul 'loro' terreno. Questa è una cosa complicatissima da capire. Eleni traduce hanno 'comprato' il terreno, ma poi si capisce che è solo una concessione per 3 anni per lo stazionamento delle carovane.
Intanto pare che la terra in Inghilterra sia della Regina. Quindi, chiunque compra solo la casa e il diritto che la casa sia lì. Però i gypsy non possono costruire casa, che è invece il sogno di Johanna, altrimenti perdono lo status di travellers (o gypsy-travellers). Pochi sono i gypsy che hanno una casa, anche se alcuni riescono ad averla (conservando lo status) per motivi di salute.[94]

---

[89] E di suo marito, Richárd Vörösvári.
[90] Per i gypsy rimando al report nazionale della ricerca e a Spencer (2012).
[91] Eleni Tracada.
[92] Johanna Price.
[93] https://youtu.be/vqMrbAINbtc
[94] Paggi, diario del 27-7-14.

Sempre nell'ufficio della *Gypsy Liaison Groups* Johanna parla con Roger[95], *planning officer* che segue la sua pratica:

Roger   Bene Johanna, il tuo permesso di stazionamento [planning permission] scade in settembre. Dobbiamo pensarci bene. Per passare alla fase successiva della domanda di rinnovo ci sono alcune cose da fare. Primo... Hai fatto qualche tentativo per trovare un altro sito? Così possiamo dimostrare che hai un cercato un altro sito.

Johanna   Sì, mi sono guardata attorno, alla ricerca di diversi siti. Ma dove sono questi siti? A 15 o 18 miglia di distanza dall'area [attuale] e c'è una lista d'attesa.

Roger   Questo va bene. Hai fatto qualcosa e possiamo inserirlo nella tua lettera di candidatura d'agosto. E speriamo di ottenere una decisione migliore questa volta, per un più lungo periodo, anche [di residenza] permanente. Quindi, questo è l'obiettivo. Ti costerà un po', ovviamente, prevedendo le tasse da pagare, quindi dobbiamo pensare a...

Johanna   Ai soldi. Ma non è solo questione di denaro, è che sto affrontando di nuovo lo stress, che mi ha fatto male l'altra volta, e ora sta crescendo, e il dottore vuole che io prenda le medicine.

FOTO 19: Checkley, casa di Johanna. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Poi Johanna spiega ad Eleni la sua situazione:

Non è facile, quando devi combattere per il permesso di stazionamento. Viviamo sulla nostra terra, abbiamo comprato il terreno sette anni fa, e stiamo cercando di ottenere il permesso di costruire su quel pezzetto di terra. È solo per me, mio marito e i nostri tre figli. Due ragazzi sono sposati e uno no. Voglio che i miei nipoti possano ricevere un'istruzione, vorrei che andassero a scuola.
Ho problemi di salute e ho bisogno di un medico. Mi sta crescendo dentro lo stress, sono molto preoccupata perché se non otteniamo il permesso di stazionamento dobbiamo tornare sulla strada, muovendoci di qui e di là, e così: i bambini non saranno scolarizzati, gli anziani della famiglia non avranno medici, né potremo avere le medicine, perché se ti sposti continuamene non puoi rivolgerti a un medico. Il medico può firmare solo se sei [risiedi] stabilmente in un posto. È molto difficile non avere una casa in cui tornare, non avere una base. Per alcune persone è solo un pezzo di terra, ma per noi è la casa che non abbiamo mai avuto prima.

---

[95] Roger Yarwood.

Le riprese continuano in casa di Johanna, col marito[96], assieme a Eleni e Siobhan. L'intervista si svolge più che bene, mutandosi in conversazione tra loro, senza pertanto nascondere che io e Valentina stiamo filmando e interveniamo con le nostre domande. Johanna mostra con orgoglio il suo giardino, di fatto, qualche vaso di fiori davanti a casa. Questa consiste in una stanza che funge da cucina e soggiorno. In un locale annesso si trovano il wc, la doccia e la lavatrice. Sul terreno antistante staziona la roulotte, molto ben attrezzata, dove dormono. Il terreno accoglie anche le altre due roulotte dei figli sposati (una era assente al momento delle riprese), ma per il terzo figlio non c'è possibilità, non hanno il permesso per una quarta.

> Johanna Per le regole di stazionamento, possiamo avere solo tre roulotte qui. Così, noi abbiamo qui [in roulotte] la stanza da letto, i miei due figli sposati hanno la loro roulotte, ma mio figlio celibe deve dormire nella nostra. È molto difficile perché non c'è privacy. È un giovane d 24 anni e vuole la sua piccola roulotte ma qui possiamo averne solo tre.

Il terreno, relativamente piccolo, è completamente recintato e occultato dal lato della strada perché le roulotte non si devono vedere da fuori. I problemi col vicinato sono decisivi, in quanto, se i locali sedentari fanno una petizione di maggioranza, hanno il diritto di mandarli via. Così loro, per anticipare questa eventualità, raccolgono il più gran numero possibile di lettere di vicini che, invece, dichiarano di accettarli. Tutto questo, comunque, solo per tre anni: dopo devono muoversi.

Riprendiamo e fotografiamo nei dettagli la casa e la roulotte, estremamente pulite e curate, come tutto da Johanna, però mi indicano alcune cose che nel film non si devono mostrare, come questa che cito come esempio della grande attenzione che devono continuamente prestare per essere accettati: "il cellofan blu che copre i giochi dei nipotini, accanto alle loro bici, dietro casa: perché può far pensare che sono rifiuti o che i gypsy sono disordinati".[97]

Foto 20: Checkley, casa di Johanna. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

---

[96] David Price.
[97] Paggi, diario del 27-7-14.

Foto 21: Checkley, casa di Johanna. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Foto 22: Checkley, interno roulotte di Johanna. Foto di Silvia Paggi, 2014.

Come la maggior parte di queste popolazioni, e in ogni paese, Johanna cura particolarmente le norme igieniche, con una netta separazione di cose, prodotti e utensili, secondo l'uso e il contatto col corpo, esterno e interno. La lunga esperienza nelle difficili condizioni di vita forzatamente nomade in roulotte ha sviluppato una coscienza ecologica, ad esempio nell'uso parsimonioso dell'acqua.

> Johanna   Non sprechi mai l'acqua. Tutta la mia acqua per lavare i piatti, la riciclo. Perché quando per così tanto tempo non hai avuto l'acqua diventi attenta.

Cercano poi di farci capire la legislatura inglese inerente allo status di gypsy e travellers, e quando chiedo quali sono le differenze, Johanna elenca cinque categorie: "1. Viaggiatori new-age 2. Viaggiatori irlandesi 3. Viaggiatori − Una razza metà gypsy, metà della comunità sedentaria 4. Gente dello spettacolo itinerante 5. Romani-gypsy, gypsy". [98]

Dell'ultima, che è la sua, Johanna dice:

> I romani-gypsy sono come una grande famiglia, anche le persone con cui non sei imparentato. Quando nasci romani gypsy... non è qualcosa che hai scelto. Noi siamo nati romani-gypsy e possiamo risalire di generazione in generazione, e nella nostra razza, la famiglia Lee e la famiglia Pros, […] erano tutti puri gypsy, puri romani-gypsy. […] Quindi... Come puoi non essere un romani-gypsy quando hai sangue puro? Il solo fatto di stare su un pezzo di terra non fa di te una comunità sedentaria.

8. Romania − Pata-Rât a Cluj-Napoca[99]

FOTO 23: Cluj-Napoca − Pata-Rât. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

---

[98] Riporto l'inglese perché la traduzione è difficile e a rischio d'ambiguità: 1. *New-age travellers* 2. *Irish travellers* 3. *Travellers − A race that is half Gypsy, half from the settled community* 4. *Show people* 5. *Romani-Gypsy, Gypsy*.
[99] Per i rom in Romania, oltre al *National Report* della ricerca, rimando a Berescu *et alii* (2006), Rughiniş (2007), Vincze *et alii* (2020).

L'ultima tappa della ricerca di antropologia visiva si è svolta in Romania, nell'agosto del 2014, con riprese principalmente a Cluj-Napoca dove è cominciato anche il lavoro di trascrizione per il montaggio del film *Around Maria's day*[100]. Dal punto di vista della comunicazione linguistica, Gyula[101], il ricercatore, parla inglese ma non ci accompagna durante le riprese perché non parla *romanes*. Invece Claudia[102], la mediatrice linguistico-culturale, parla *romanes* ma non inglese, né altra lingua in comune con noi, ciò che non impedirà l'instaurarsi di un rapporto di grande simpatia. Il lavoro di (doppia) traduzione ha perciò richiesto più tempo e il montaggio (con la relativa sottotitolazione in inglese) del film è stato terminato a Firenze, dove Gyula ha gentilmente accettato di raggiungermi in dicembre, appena in tempo per la presentazione alla conferenza finale del progetto realizzato[103].

Nella prima riunione con Gyula e Claudia, dapprima si prospettano riprese in abitazioni sociali[104], ma poi cominciano a parlarci dei quartieri difficili alla periferia di Cluj-Napoca. Si tratta di baraccopoli sorte attorno alle discariche: il recupero dei rifiuti è qui, per molti rom, un mezzo di sussistenza. Ce ne sono tre, di cui ci riassumono la situazione per pericolosità crescente. Provo a insistere per andare nel peggior quartiere, chiamato 'Dallas', ma incontro un rifiuto categorico: troppo rischioso. Scarto il meno peggio (che mi pare più simile a situazioni abitative che potremo vedere altrove) e ci indirizziamo quindi a Pata-Rât. Nel diario appunto impressioni dell'impatto con questa situazione abitativa:

> Quando ci siamo avvicinati al quartiere in macchina, credevo che si trattasse del detto 'Dallas', di cui pensavo aver cominciato a vedere le tracce con i camion di discarica e gli uomini attorno. L'impatto per me è forte. Mi viene la depressione appena arrivo, ogni volta. Il contrasto per fortuna è grande con l'accoglienza della casa e degli abitanti. Anche qui vanno pazzi per farsi fotografare, i bimbi soprattutto: alimentati dal metodo accentratore di Margherita che li fa giocare con l'apparecchio. Questo è comunque un quartiere solo rom e si sente la comunità di scambi, la prossimità, l'entreaide, ma anche le liti, a ciò che si dice.[105]

Foto 24: Cluj-Napoca – Pata-Rât. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

---

[100] https://youtu.be/hms7ewEwm6k
[101] Gyula Iuliu Kozák. Per il partner Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale (ISPMN).
[102] Claudia Lăcătuș, docente di lingua *romaní*.
[103] *Final International Conference*, Firenze, Istituto degli Innocenti, 5 dicembre 2014.
[104] Abbiamo infatti incontrato altre famiglie, a Cluj-Napoca e a Huedin, oltre a quella di cui parlo qui, protagonista del film.
[105] Paggi, diario 17-8-2014.

La famiglia[106] che a più riprese ci accoglie è considerata una delle più benestanti del quartiere. Ci accoglie e anche ci protegge, venendoci a prendere ogni volta che scendiamo dall'auto, che dobbiamo posteggiare sulla strada, proprio in linea retta con la loro casa. Anca, chiamata anche Maria, di cui filmerò la festa per l'onomastico, è un'alunna di Claudia[107]. Il film alterna i preparativi culinari e le danze festive di quel giorno con il racconto di Nicu e Sonia, frutto di una lunga intervista[108] effettuata nei giorni precedenti. La loro abitazione si trova in prossimità di uno dei soli due punti d'acqua della baraccopoli, dove abitano centinaia di famiglie. Non abbiamo assolutamente il permesso di uscire dall'area della loro casa, né di circolare (non parliamo di filmare o fotografare) a Pata-Rât.

FOTO 25: Casa di Sonia a Pata-Rât. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

Claudia dice di non conoscere bene la sua *neam[109]*, Nicu si dice *Romungro*, Sonia *Fusăriță*. La loro storia di vita, con le peripezie abitative che l'accompagnano, rimanda a molte sentite negli altri paesi, con la particolarità d'atterrare a Pata-Rât. Nicu racconta che suo padre muore quando lui ha quattro anni. Con i fratelli e la madre vivono dapprima in appartamento a Cluj-Napoca. Nessuno è veramente scolarizzato, anche se lui ha frequentato un po', e devono guadagnarsi da vivere. Vanno quindi presso dei parenti in un villaggio a lavorare nei campi. Poi uno zio gli lascia un carretto per fare trasporti, al quale, col tempo, attaccano un cavallo. Quando si sposa con Sonia non hanno casa.

> Nicu   Dovevamo dormire all'aperto, nel carretto. Poi andammo a Becas, fuori dalla città. D'inverno dormivamo per terra, sulla neve. Dormivamo in un lettino militare da campo, senza alcun materasso, con cellofan al posto delle coperte. Nel frattempo, hanno continuato a multarci, ancora e ancora. Abbiamo preso molte multe perché vivevamo all'aperto e perché il cavallo pascolava in un'area verde.

---

[106] Sonia Lingurar, il marito Nicu Bocretaș e i loro due figli, Anca e David.
[107] Gli alunni di Claudia sono stati spesso il tramite per introdurci nelle famiglie.
[108] Tra loro, e a volte con Claudia, parlano *romanes*.
[109] Nome del gruppo di parentela rom.

I problemi con polizia e municipalità saranno ricorrenti e persistono anche a Pata-Rât. Suo fratello riesce poi a parlare con qualcuno al Comune e li alloggiano vicino alle stalle di un villaggio, da cui verranno, però, ben presto espulsi in seguito a problemi creati da altri rom lì presenti.

> Nicu   Lì, nei campi arrivò altra gente... erano tigani ungheresi. Presero mais e spinaci per mangiarli. Dopo di che non ci hanno più permesso di stare lì. Ci hanno espulso. Tutti. A causa di uno, siamo dovuti andar via tutti.

Li mettono, poi, nel cortile di un ufficio postale dismesso, non lontano da Pata-Rât, in un autobus fuori uso, senza niente, nemmeno i vetri alle finestre, che riparano con pezzi di compensato.

> Nicu   Abbiamo mangiato dallo stesso piatto dei topi. Non avevamo frigorifero o credenza. Dovevi mangiare subito tutto quello che avevi perché non c'era un posto per conservare il cibo. Non avevamo acqua da bere. Una macchina per lavare le strade ci ha portato dell'acqua.

Quando qualcuno compra il sito, sono nuovamente espulsi dalla polizia. Sonia che segue il racconto sospira: "Abbiamo avuto una vita difficile!". Li mandano allora a Pata-Rât, ma senza il minimo aiuto per installarsi. Da questo punto del racconto di Nicu, il 'noi' comincia a riferirsi anche all'insieme degli abitanti della baraccopoli.

> Nicu   E da lì ci hanno portato qui. Alcuni avevano l'autobus, altri no. Quando siamo arrivati qui, non ci hanno dato niente. Non avevamo assi [per costruire un riparo]. Dormivamo qua fuori. Non avevamo acqua. Eravamo senza un tetto. A un certo punto, una fondazione ci ha portato venti assi per famiglia, ma non bastavano ed erano lunghe solo due metri. Col tempo, siamo comunque riusciti a costruire qualche cosa, prendendo materiale dalla discarica[110]. Così siamo arrivati a questa situazione: da un cavallo col carretto. Il comune ci ha messo qui e ognuno ha costruito la propria casa come ha potuto. Ma non è una situazione definitiva. Noi siamo qui dal 2001.

Molti vivono recuperando rifiuti dalla discarica di Pata-Rât, specialmente le bottiglie di plastica. Ci parlano di diversi incidenti dovuti al fatto che alcuni si avvicinano troppo ai camion: c'è concorrenza anche nel raccogliere i rifiuti.

> Nicu   La gente cerca di accaparrarsi un buon posto intorno al camion, per quando scarica la spazzatura. Puoi, ad esempio, essere colpito dal gancio mentre cerchi di prendere una bottiglia che ti sta davanti. È una grande lotta tra la gente. Qualcuno è morto per una bottiglia vuota, come quello a cui è caduta addosso una macchina. Un camion si è rovesciato su quattro persone.
> Sonia   Ho sentito dire che un camion ha investito anche un'altra ragazza.
> Nicu   È molto pericoloso! Puoi essere colpito per una bottiglia vuota!
> Sonia   Le cose vanno molto male laggiù!
> Nicu   I fili della corrente elettrica [una volta] sono caduti sulla strada e sulle baracche. Il condotto principale del gas passa proprio qui.

Devono fare attenzione ai bambini che giocano fuori perché la baraccopoli si sviluppa lungo la strada principale, dove auto e camion passano continuamente ad alta velocità, causando incidenti.

> Sonia   La strada qua fuori è molto pericolosa per i nostri bambini e le baracche sono vicino alla strada.
> Nicu   Viveva qui con noi un uomo che non aveva altro posto dove andare. È anziano e lo lasciamo stare con noi. Gli diamo da mangiare: quello che mangiamo, lui mangia. Ed è stato investito sul marciapiede da un'auto.
> Un'altra donna anziana era seduta su una sedia davanti alla sua porta, vicino al marciapiede. Dalla fabbrica, è arrivato un camion che svoltando nella curva ha colpito in pieno la donna. È molto, molto rischioso qui!

---

[110] *Deposit de Gunoi Pata-Rât.*

Altri incidenti accadono perché le baracche bruciano facilmente.

> Nicu   D'inverno, alcune baracche sono andate a fuoco perché non abbiamo camini. Avevamo dei tubi, ma non erano sicuri. Alcuni tetti sono coperti con cellofan e col calore le baracche hanno preso fuoco. Quattro baracche sono bruciate prima che arrivassero i pompieri.

Oltre al cortile tuttofare, in parte trasformato in veranda, la loro casa consiste in una stanza soggiorno-notte e una cucina. Ora c'è la luce elettrica e arriva l'acqua nel lavandino. Le galline, le oche e il cagnolino di casa circolano liberamente nel cortile, che David, il figlio più piccolo, investe con i suoi giochi. Nella veranda ci sono un frigorifero, un tavolo da pranzo e la stufa a legna su cui si cucina perché l'elettricità costerebbe troppo. La preparazione culinaria di Sonia, aiutata da Claudia, per la festa, prende diverse ore, e chiedo alle mie due giovani collaboratrici di restare nell'altra stanza, per ritrovare le mie abitudini filmando da sola.

Foto 26: Veranda di Sonia a Pata-Rât. Foto di Margherita Boccali, 2014.

Sul davanti, si entra nel cortile di casa attraverso un cancelletto, spesso chiuso per sicurezza con un lucchetto, soprattutto per non fare uscire i bimbi: Nicu e Sonia non permettono volentieri ai figli di andare a giocare fuori. Da una porticina di legno in fondo alla veranda si esce sul retro. Ogni tanto filmo il fuori da dentro, soprattutto il punto d'acqua, che intravedo oltre il cancelletto, dove si avvicendano donne, bambini e i carretti tirati dai cavalli che si fermano ad abbeverarsi. Il retro, lo intravedo attraverso qualche apertura della porticina di legno, dalla quale poi oso uscire, senza però mai allontanarmi. Il terreno dietro le baracche di Pata-Rât, lungo dei binari abbandonati, è uno spazio desolante, pieno di rifiuti[111], dove bimbi e cani vagano raccogliendo. Una volta, Nicu è venuto mentre stavo filmando fuori sul retro e, aiutandosi a gesti per farmi capire, mi ha raccontato un incidente, avvenuto quando qui passava ancora il treno che ha lacerato le gambe a un bimbo. Lui l'ha soccorso: "Mi sono tolto la cintura, gli ho legato la gamba e ho chiamato l'ambulanza. Aveva solo nove anni".

---

[111] Da non confondere con la discarica, anche se ne assume qualche sembianza. Qui c'è anche un WC di uso comune.

Grande contrasto di questi drammatici racconti con la festa e i balli che, con grande partecipazione di bimbi del vicinato, si susseguono per tutto il pomeriggio dell'onomastico di Anca-Maria. È bello vedere che, nonostante tutte le traversie e i problemi, questa gente riesce anche a essere allegra e felice.

Conclusioni

Anche se non ho voluto riassumere in un solo film l'insieme di questa ricerca, molti sono gli aspetti che accomunano le vicende e le condizioni d'abitazione dei rom nei sei paesi europei in cui si è svolta. Le condizioni di povertà, a lungo e ancora sofferte da queste popolazioni, aiutano anche a capire che la casa, forse ancor più che per altri, diventi un luogo simbolo. In Romania abbiamo incontrato famiglie emigrate che edificano ville nel loro villaggio d'origine, dove progettano comunque di tornare una volta in pensione, ma dove sanno anche che non sarà lo stesso per i loro figli, cresciuti in altre società. Ci sono poi delle grandi dimore, quasi castelli, di cui non ci siamo interessate, ma le abbiamo viste in Romania, dove delle più imponenti ci è stato detto che sono abitate solo in parte, dedicando i grandi saloni alle visite e alle cerimonie per battesimi o matrimoni. Simbolo di prestigio in questi casi, l'abitazione è comunque sempre strettamente correlata allo status e all'identità.

In ogni paese, abbiamo incontrato la costante delle discriminazioni sociali, spesso razziali. La situazione abitativa in campi nomadi, baraccopoli e simili, comporta enormi difficoltà per l'inserimento scolastico e per lavorare. Si deve nascondere di essere rom per trovare lavoro e conservarlo, si deve nascondere di vivere in un quartiere stigmatizzato come marginale e malfamato. E non è sempre possibile. Salute e speranza di vita sono anch'esse correlate alle problematiche condizioni d'igiene, all'insufficiente accesso all'acqua, alla mancanza di elettricità, a modi di riscaldamento ad alto rischio d'incendio. Non c'è modo di conservare a lungo correttamente gli alimenti.

Le reticenze ad accogliere ricercatori, a farsi filmare e fotografare, deriva da un pudore della povertà e delle precarie condizioni abitative, ma anche da una accorta prudenza nel mostrare tutto ciò che potrebbe rafforzare nei non-rom un'immagine negativa della loro identità sociale. Si sentono, così mi è stato espresso, "come qualcuno messo in gabbia che si va a fotografare".

Queste condizioni a rischio socio-ambientale, pervase di razzismo, permangono in gran parte anche abitando nei quartieri 'sociali', spesso vissuti come ghetti. Invece, andando a vivere in quartieri ad alta presenza di non-rom, si sviluppano forme di paura del vicinato, cui si deve nascondere la propria identità per farsi accettare, comportando a volte, com'è stato particolarmente chiaro in Inghilterra, il rischio di perdere il diritto stesso di abitare.

La lunga esperienza di condizioni precarie dell'abitare, con difficile gestione delle risorse socialmente condivise e degli spazi esterni, ha sviluppato, per contrasto e necessità, una particolare cura dell'ambiente interno. I rom tengono molto alla pulizia, funzione assunta prevalentemente dalle donne, osservano molte norme igieniche, come, ad esempio, il togliersi le scarpe entrando in casa, il tenere separati prodotti e utensili secondo l'uso e il diverso contatto con le parti, esterne o interne, del corpo. Da queste necessarie attenzioni dovute alla precarietà dell'abitare, si è anche sviluppata una coscienza che oggi definiamo ecologica, ad esempio nell'uso parsimonioso dell'acqua.

Anche la dialettica tra le condizioni considerate di nomadismo e quelle di sedentarietà, rivela la stretta connessione tra l'identità e l'abitare. I rom tengono culturalmente a conservare i legami sociali della loro comunità. Queste relazioni sono molto importanti, implicando non solo un adeguato spazio abitativo interno per accogliere parenti di passaggio in famiglie spesso già numerose, ma anche uno spazio esterno dove potersi riunire in più gran numero e dove possano giocare insieme e in sicurezza i bambini delle varie famiglie. Il loro modo di vita implica anche la possibilità di recarsi in luoghi di grandi incontri, per diversi giorni, utilizzando quindi temporaneamente la roulotte come abitazione. Tutti gli intervistati desiderano una situazione abitativa stabile, una vita normalmente inserita nella società in cui vivono, ma compatibile con abitudini per loro essenziali all'identità individuale e comunitaria.

Nonostante i rom siano cittadini europei di lunga data, lo studio del loro caso mette in luce la complessità della moderna coabitazione in società che si vogliono e sono multiculturali, ma che presentano ancora difficili e incompiuti processi detti d'inclusione o integrazione delle minoranze e delle diversità, con proponimenti che tendono spesso più all'omologazione che al reciproco rispetto delle diversità culturali.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

BARACSI, Kitti
2016   The Unmaking of Roma Students: Contributing from a Critical and Engaged Ethnography. *The Age of Human Rights Journal*, 7.
        https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311883748_The_Unmaking_of_Roma_StudentsContributing_from_a_Critical_and_Engaged_Ethnography

BELUSCHI FABENI, Giuseppe
2013   *Roma Korturare entre Transilvania y Andalucía: Procesos migratorios y reproducción cultural*. PhD diss. Universidad de Granada.

BELUSCHI FABENI, Giuseppe – LOPEZ LOPEZ, Juan de Dios
2014   La etnicità come richiamo. Immagine turistica e conflitto nelle cuevas del Sacromonte (Granada, Spagna). In *Uguali, diversi, normali. Stereotipi, rappresentazioni e contro narrative del mondo rom in Italia, Spagna e Romania*. Martina Giuffrè (ed). Roma: Castelvecchi.

BERESCU Cătălin *et alii*
2006   *Housing and Extreme Poverty. The Case of Roma Communities*. Bucureşti: Ion Mincu University Press.

BONIFACIO, Valentina
2013   Le statut ambigu de la caméra : une refléxion sur l'utilisation de la caméra-vidéo dans le cadre d'un travail de terrain avec les Maskoy dans la région de Chaco au Paraguay. *Mondes contemporains*, n. 3: *Terrains en anthropologie visuelle*. Silvia Paggi (ed).

BRAZZABENI, Micol
2012   De bairro em bairro: redes sociais e circulação de uma família cigana em Vila Real de Santo António. In *Portugueses Ciganos e Ciganofobia em Portugal*. José Gabriel Pereira Bastos (ed). Lisboa: Edições Colibri.

CASTRO, Alexandra
2010   Ciganos e desigualdades sociais: contributos para a inflexão de políticas públicas de carácter universalista. *Fórum Sociológico* n. 20.

DE FRANCE, Claudine
1979   Corps, matière et rite dans le film ethnographique. In *Pour une anthropologie visuelle*. Claudine de France (ed). Paris-La Haye: Mouton Editeur.
1981   I fondamenti di un'antropologia filmica. *La Ricerca Folklorica*, n. 3: *Antropologia Visiva: il cinema*.
1989   [1982] *Cinéma et Anthropologie*. Paris: Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
1994   (ed) *Du film ethnographique à l'anthropologie filmique*. Paris: Éditions des Archives contemporaines.
1996   L'antropologia filmica: una genesi difficile ma promettente. *Ossimori* n. 8, traduzione e commento di Silvia Paggi.

DE HEUSCH, Luc
1962   *Cinéma et sciences sociales*. Paris: Unesco.

LATOUR, Bruno
2005   *Reassembling the Social*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MACDOUGALL, David
1979   Au delà du cinéma d'observation. In *Pour une anthropologie visuelle*. Claudine de France (ed). Paris: Mouton Editeur.

MACHADO, Paulo Filipe
1994   A Presença Cigana em Portugal: um caso de exclusão secular. *Mediterrâneo* n. 4.

MEAD, Margaret
1980   [1975] L'antropologia visiva in una disciplina di parole. *La Ricerca Folklorica* n. 2: *Antropologia Visiva: la fotografia.*

PAGGI, Silvia
1993   A propos de l'interview filmée dans la recherche anthropologique. In *Memory and Multiculturalism*, VIII International Oral History Conference, Lucca-Siena.
2006   Osservazione partecipante. *AM - Antropologia museale* anno 4 n. 14 : *Culture visive: parole chiavi degli antropologi.*
2013   Presentation. *Mondes contemporains* n. 3: *Terrains en anthropologie visuelle.* Silvia Paggi (ed).
2015   Considerazioni sulla mediazione della parola in antropologia filmica. *Voci. Annuale di Scienze Umane* anno XII.
2016   L'antropologo-cineasta rivisitato. *LARES* anno LXXXII n. 3.

PIASERE, Leonardo
1991   *Popoli delle discariche. Saggi di antropologia zingara.* Roma: CISU.
2004   *I Rom d'Europa. Una storia moderna.* Roma-Bari: Laterza.
2012   *Scenari dell'antiziganismo.* Firenze: SEID.

PIASERE, Leonardo − PONTRANDOLFO, Stefania (eds)
2016   *Italia Romaní*, VI: *Le migrazioni dei rom romeni in Italia.* Roma: CISU.

ROUCH, Jean
1968   Le film ethnographique. In *Ethnologie générale.* Jean Poirier (ed). Paris: Gallimard.
1979   La caméra et les hommes. In *Pour une anthropologie visuelle.* Claudine de France (ed). Paris: Cahiers de l'Homme, Mouton Editeur et EHESS. Trad. it. 1988 Jean Rouch, *Il cinema del contatto.* Raul Grisolia (ed). Bulzoni: Roma.

RUGHINIS, Ana Cosima
2007   *Social Housing and Roma Residents in Romania.* Budapest: CEU Policy Documentation.

SPENCER, Siobhan
2012   To be a Gypsy and not by a 'gypsy'? That is the Question.
        https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/features/be-gypsy-and-not-be-gypsy-question

SZALAI, Júlia
2014   Roma Marginalization and Exclusion in a Comparative Perspective. In *Faces and Causes of Roma Marginalization in Local Contexts: Hungary, Romania, Serbia.* Júlia Szalai − Violetta Zentai (eds). Budapest: Central European University.

TOSI CAMBINI, Sabrina
2015   [2008] *La zingara rapitrice. Racconti, denunce, sentenze (1986-2007).* Seconda edizione riveduta e ampliata, Roma: CISU.
2016   Da un villaggio del sud della Romania a una città del centro Italia. Alcuni elementi di riflessione intorno al tempo, allo spazio e al senso nella migrazione di una rete di famiglie di rudari. In *Italia Romaní*, VI: *Le migrazioni dei rom romeni in Italia.* Leonardo Piasere − Stefania Pontrandolfo (eds). Roma: CISU.

TOSI CAMBINI, Sabrina − SOLIMANO, Nicola
2014   Rom e Sinti in Toscana. Un abitare amaro che non diventa casa. In *Case e non-case. Povertà abitative in Toscana.* Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci (ed). Firenze: SEID.

Tosi Cambini, Sabrina – Sidoti, Simona
2006   Esperienze innovative per l'abitare di Rom e Sinti. Case casette baracche e roulotte. In *Atlante dell'alloggio sociale e dell'Accoglienza*. Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci e ARCI Toscana (ed).

Vincze, Eniko *et alii*
2020   Housing Struggles in Romania and in Central Eastern Europe (CEE). *Radical Housing Journal*.

Rapporti di ricerca del progetto *Wor(l)ds which Exclude*
http://weproject.unice.fr:

2014   Wor(l)ds which Exclude. The Housing Issue of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in the Language of the Acts and the Administrative Documents in Europe. Ebook.
2014   Wor(l)ds which Exclude. Recommendations: Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom.
2014   WE: Wor(l)ds Which Exclude. Introduction to the National Reports. Tosi Cambini S., Giovanni Michelucci Foundation.
2014   Wor(l)ds which Exclude. National Reports: Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom.

Film / Video / Multimedia

Paggi, Silvia
1994   *Civitella 1944-1994*. 52 min. Italia. Versione sottotitolata in francese.
2014   *Housing conditions of Roma people in Europe*. Serie di 7 film etnografici, versione inglese sottotitolata:
       Are we going beyond nomad camps? Housing issues of Roma in Tuscany. 31 min. Italy. https://youtu.be/nV2of3iinvM
       Around Maria's day. 34 min. Romania. https://youtu.be/hms7ewEwm6k
       Daniel y Claudia. 17 min. Spain. https://vimeo.com/319185201
       Johanna's tribulations. 32 min. United Kingdom. https://youtu.be/vqMrbAINbtc
       Living in Velény. 20 min. Hungary. https://youtu.be/VXBxPrRYKVs
       Quando saímos ?. 25 min. Portugal. https://youtu.be/C9UoOVXGiFs
       Sacromonte de ida y vuelta. 17 min. Spain. https://vimeo.com/495543315

Homes: things and senses

Gloria Giacomelli, *University of Siena*

ABSTRACT

This report draws on findings of the ethnographic research I did from February to July 2019 in Pistoia, northern Tuscany. It was an exploration of the material culture, the behaviours and the consumption practices in homes. Three families of three and four members each and two young and single boys were involved in the research. Reflecting on what can be a 'home', the attention initially focused on what was inside them. 'Things' are surely the staple of the domestic world and must all be considered: from the most ordinary ones to the most unusual. The nature of the relationship between the owner and the item was also taken into account and is very significant to this research. Then, as the data was being gathered, another aspect that came to relevance as an invisible and constant presence was 'senses': the mostly unconscious means with which people experience the domestic sphere. All these areas of the research ended up being strictly connected, as different facets of a prism through which we can observe the same reality: the homemaking process.

KEYWORDS

home, senses, material culture, ethnography, Tuscany.

BIO

Gloria Giacomelli (1991) is a recent graduate student in Anthropology and Languages of Image at the University of Siena.

gloria.giacomelli@live.it

Things and senses

Doing ethnographic research in homes is a complex and gradual pursuit. Not only because the domestic environment is what most intimate can be, but also because it's inevitable, at some point, to face intricate and delicate familiar dynamics and personal matters that require great care. Most of these aspects are often expressed through the material world in many forms. For all these reasons, the tangible aspect of the house it's the point from which this research began.

Domestic objects are what immediately attracted attention. They were everywhere, a lot different from each other and changed their use or position for apparent no reasons. The most common groups of items found in every home were those from the heritage of the Tuscan sharecropping-era and those in some way related to technology and electronics. What changed continually were the entanglements of relationships that things and their owners were implicated in. However, there were other objects surely less evident to a stranger's eye but a lot more crucial for their owners: the ones in which people were most emotionally engaged. For these things, two main behaviours emerged: their apparent absence or their strategic display.

Franca, an 89-year-old woman who lives with her son and her daughter-in-law, has a violet blanket her mother gave her when she married, more than sixty years ago. She has never used it. It's still in its plastic bag inside a drawer in her bedroom. In her opinion, using that blanket means ruining it and ruining the blanket is like losing the memory of her mother. Franca's objects of affection are all hidden inside her wardrobe so nobody can see or touch them. By protecting those things, all the memories that are tied to them are safe.

Claudia, a 51-year-old woman who lives with her husband, her son and her daughter, has the opposite behaviour instead. Her most important objects are those made by her father, who was a foundry owner and died when she was a teenager. She is certain that the only manner to keep alive his memory is constantly seeing, touching and using those things. That's why they are scattered around the home and the garden.

But what happens when the violet blanket is transmitted to Franca's descendants? It will become a family good. This means that the affection she now feels towards it can decrease and the value it has in the present can change in the future. Inheriting family goods means inheriting also the obligation to take care of their story, even if these things have insignificant economic value or debatable usefulness. Also, family goods are objects in which the affection is shared and handed down, almost forced. When memories become less vivid and the time distance between the first and the last owner of that object increases, the emotional attachment fades, the value is re-evaluated and the drive to take care of that object is perceived as an obligation. Besides, being that the material transmissibility is most of all cultural, through the objects are transmitted some important cultural factors that can have been transformed in the meantime.

Consequently to these reasons, old and new generations have shown different perceptions of value and tend to differ when it comes to deciding what to do with an item they inherited. In these circumstances, all the objects that are made to keep family members together, creating a sense of belonging, are the same that can create family separations instead. This kind of objects turned out being a fundamental and also contradictory category.

However, distinctions emerged also about the use and the display of the ordinary things that are common and required in the domestic environment. Every domestic object, from the most useful to the purely decorative, has, in fact, a reason why it is where it is (Kopytoff in Appadurai 1986: 64-90) and builds a dialectical relationship with its owner through the time (Miller 2010: 102-186). Objects are a matter which is alive and with which people enter into dialogue.

One of the first definitions people involved in the research gave of themselves, as inhabitants of their own houses, was being 'tidy' or 'messy'. They told me one of these two words in a very definitive way, showing me a specific place and the way objects were placed in it. They were tidy or messy just because they were born like that and their houses were the tangible proof of their words. But why this definition was so set in them?

Every time I entered their houses something had changed. Some objects were in a different position, some were new, and others were broken, decorated or disappeared. Also, some pieces of furniture changed their shape, their colour or their usual spot. What was true in people's definitions was the fact that everybody dealt with the constant and inevitable change of life being more or less organized. This behaviour, however, didn't always coincide with the definition they gave of themselves.

Paola is a 29-year-old woman who lives with her parents and her younger brother. She cleans and tides her home every day. She also cooks, does the laundry and irons the clothes for everyone. When her family moved to their actual home, more than twenty years ago, she was a kid. Her parents decided to assign her the biggest bedroom of the home, while her brother took the smallest. The reasons for this choice, however, were not so innocent. Because she is a female, her parents reserved her the role of future housewife. They also predicted her future discontent for doing all the domestic works. Giving her that big single room was a way to reward her effort. Also, her parents were used to host many relatives in certain periods of the year and because they didn't want to sleep with others, they passed on the bigger bedroom, indirectly forcing their daughter to often share her room with someone else. Growing up, Paola reacted to this situation by continuing to do domestic works as always, except in her bedroom. Her wardrobe is now full of things and the wood of her desk is quite invisible. Most importantly, the sofa-bed reserved for guests goes almost unnoticed because it's covered by clothes, shoes, books, papers and every other kind of stuff. So, is Paola tidy or messy? Both of them. She uses cleaning and organizing practices to demonstrate how good of a daughter, sister and hostess she is. At the same time, she uses mess to impose her presence and her will. Her bounded mess is a way to define her space of privacy and freedom from all other areas. Here she can be herself, without taking any role.

On the other hand, Elena, Claudia's daughter, is 15 years old and is sure to be tidy. She spends a lot of time tidying and cleaning the whole house, spontaneously. In doing so, she's the only one who can find the objects her relatives are searching for. No surprises there when I noticed that her nickname was 'Miss Perfection'. Elena has learned to see herself as an extremely tidy person and pursues behaving in this way. In this situation, the question that immediately comes to mind is: What are the origins of Elena's behaviour? The answer is evident looking at the shape and the structure of the home where she lives. Elena doesn't have a bedroom of her own. When she was born, her brother was 9 and refused to share his room with his sister. Since then, Elena has always slept in her parents' room. Growing up, she showed the need to have her space and intimacy but her home isn't big enough. This is why being tidy is not only a trait of her personality. Tidying is her manner to control and protect her things and spaces containing the ones of others. But facing a constant daily mess, made by other family members, Elena can't choose a particular system of organization and maintain it. Moreover, if she could have her bedroom, she would still be this tidy?

Seeing both sides, it's evident that everyone is tidy and messy at the same time, each in his or her own different way. Being 'tidy' or 'messy' is not a permanent trait of our personality, but a dynamic way to explore, build and express our own identity.

Going back to the initial question of this topic, we can say that what creates a definition of ourselves as inhabitants are the relations and, more often, the contrapositions between each family members' behaviour and between our inherited or new domestic skills and the outside world's norms (Douglas 1993).

Here's the point: things are not just things. Domestic objects are tangible means of inner forms of living in which a lot of complex factors are involved: culture, family, historic epoch, society, habits, and projections. Why we choose some objects instead of others, why we use or not use them and why some are organized and others messy are questions that need to be answered keeping in mind the factors listed above, which are the ones that make each way of living unique, personal. Just like a house is an environment where nothing can be unalterable, people's behaviour transforms as time goes by, as the priorities and moods change, as family dynamics are created or altered. It's also affected by the space available and the influences from the outside world. In this perspective, spaces and things are strictly also connected with all the intangible dimensions that are usually ignored. The light, the sound and the smell, in particular, are what most affect our entire way of life. Each of us has a particular sensorial priority with which approaches to life and also to his home (Pink 2017).

Giosuè, for example, a 28-year-old man who lives alone, is a visual person. He needs to see everything to be sure of having control over it. His things are accurately tidied up and cleaned. Everything is sorted by colour and category and finds its specific spot in the open and minimal space. He grew up in a very chaotic home and with the purpose to get rid of the mess from his life he decided to be extremely tidy and to act as a complete opposite to his mother. Most of all, he likes luminous and airy rooms and these are the reasons why he loves his home, that has many windows from which the light comes. His needing of natural light pushed him to move some of his domestic activities in the proximity of the windows that have become space of relaxing, gardening, working and laundry. In some ways, his purpose is to let the

outside world enter inside his home. Not only the light but also the sounds and the smells are free to come in. While he cooks or cleans the rooms, he constantly pays attention to the sounds coming from the street or smells the food just cooked by his neighbour. Giosuè lives in a home where, metaphorically, there aren't walls, windows or doors. Everything that's inside comes from the outside and this means that, in a certain way, his home doesn't have its voice or its smell. He doesn't live *in* his home but *from* his home.

Matteo, instead, a 29-year-old man who shares an apartment with a friend, has an auditive attitude. He necessarily has to listen to some specific sounds. The music he likes is the most important one. Nothing that happens outside his home's walls can enter inside. The sounds coming from the streets or those produced by his domestic appliances are noises that need to be covered by something more familiar and enjoyable to him. Also, the natural light is not allowed to cross the shutters, always closed, and the main lights of the house are constantly switched off because they are too bright to him. Matteo orients himself thanks to the few soft lights he has around the house and to the lights coming from digital devices. Living in a dark environment, the perception of the domestic space necessarily changes and so do his movements and activities. This is why he doesn't pay attention to the disposition of objects. He needs just a bunch of horizontal and vertical surfaces on which lay or hang his stuff. For this reason, the definition he gives of himself is 'messy', even if his multiple piles of objects are divided into categories, arranged in specific areas and are singles parts of a bigger and organized system of piles. He doesn't see the mess; he serves it to know where to go and to have his things at hand. With specific sounds, soft lights and a lot of 'organized-messy' objects Matteo has completely isolated his home from the external world. The home itself, though, is lived and perceived mostly through its auditive and tactile parts. Material and sensory aspects are qualities that Matteo uses not to stay in his home but to feel it.

What's clear through these examples is that sensorial dimensions must be considered not only as important as material dimensions, but also as 'things' that intervene in our way of living with massive impact. In manners that we can't always be aware of, sounds, sights, smells and tactile surfaces can modify our entire way of moving, thinking and making decisions about our home. In fact, not only they push us to stay in front of our window or to turn on a scented candle, but they also guide us in our little or big daily choices. It's because of the soft light that we love that we move in a certain way and buy a light curtain or a warm light bulb. And it's because of our hate of food smells that we keep our windows open, clean frequently and buy some air freshener. In well-established and unaware ways, senses guide us in many forms. They influence our preferences in terms of domestic behaviour, of care of the home and, most of all, of consumption. Our sensorial approach is what determines the material world around us.

Conclusion: homes

Reflecting on objects, on senses and, therefore, on domestic behaviours, a 'home' turned out to be something that, with its position, dimensions, structure and shape, can affect people's daily life. But a home resulted being a much more than that. It has fragile boundaries, materially and culturally. Inside and outside are not noticeable so easily and, most of all, their definition cannot be immovable. In this perspective, also material and abstract dimensions are strictly connected. They are at the same time the cause and the result of each other.

The main distinction between homes that at the beginning was almost obvious — bigger and property houses with a courtyard for families who prefer peripheral areas, and small rental apartments in the city centre for the two young and single boys, has proved not so right and, most of all, useless. The distinctions in ages, responsibilities, desires and needs of every household were inevitably reflected not in each house's type but in each way of homemaking. Each person, even when living with others, thinks, perceives, lives and projects his home in a peculiar way. Besides, the individual homemaking is also a continually on-going process, producing always new distinctions and needing of adaptation. Matteo, Giosuè, Claudia, Paola, Roberta and their respective families, who accepted my presence in their homes, are examples of all these possible differences, adaptations and visions. In each case, they confirmed that mental and material homemaking (Cieerad 2010) are processes that inevitably refer to familiar memories and relate to the future projections of everyone. In conclusion, turning a house into a home is a complex and endless project that, in material and sensory ways, finds its roots and its developments both in cultural and emotional spheres and it always mirrors the building of the self-identity.

PHOTO 1: A statue made by Claudia's father and placed in her living room

PHOTO 2: The living room of Claudia and Elena's home

PHOTO 3: The entryway of Claudia's home; this is the mess that her daughter Elena has to face every day

PHOTO 4: The skylight of Giosuè's home: this is his favourite window

PHOTO 5: The window in the kitchen of Giosuè's home: outside there is a plant of basil; inside, the shelf has become a desk

Photo 6: This is the laundry area near the window in Giosuè's home

Photo 7: This is the breakfast kitchen cabinet in Giosuè's home

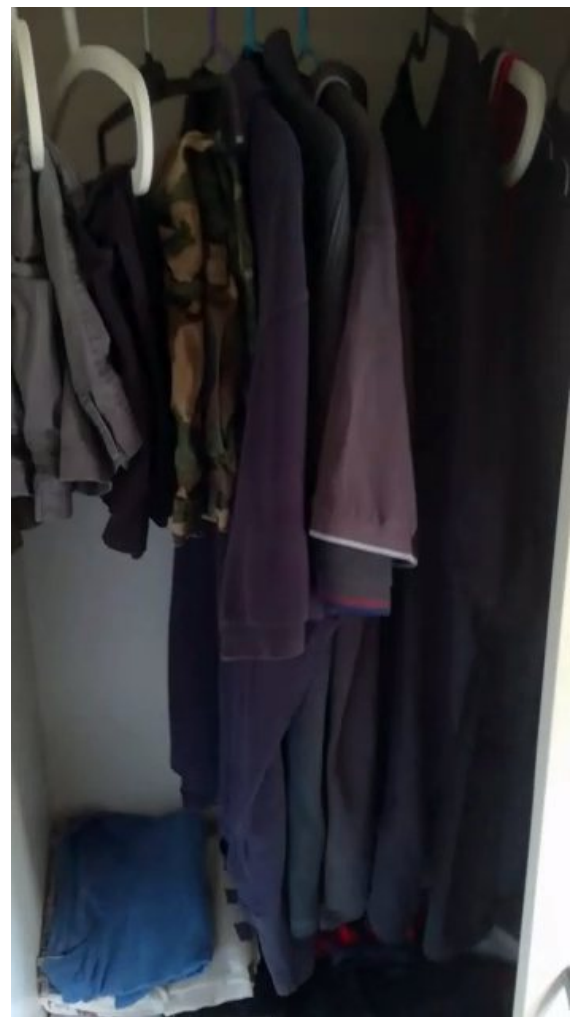**Photo 8:** This is the dark colours section of Giosuè's wardrobe

PHOTO 9: This is the pile of shoes in front of Matteo's bedroom

PHOTO 10: These are Matteo's piles of stuff in his bedroom

PHOTO 11: The bedroom's window of Matteo; this is the only way in which the light from the outside can enter is his space
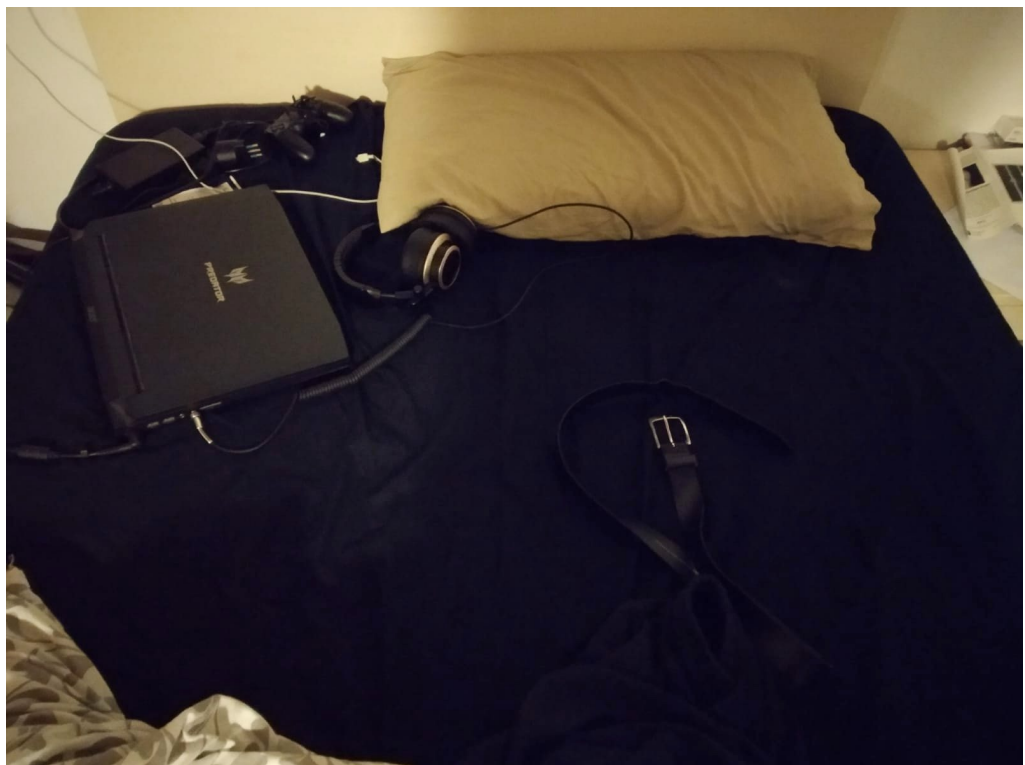
PHOTO 12: The laptop and the headphones on Matteo's bed; he's used to sleep with his devices

REFERENCES

APPADURAI, Arjun
1986   *The social life of Things. Commodities in cultural perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CIERAAD, Irene
2010   Homes from Home. Memories and Projections. *Home Cultures* 7(1): 85-102.

DOUGLAS, Mary
1993   *Purezza e pericolo. Un'analisi dei concetti di contaminazione e tabù.* Bologna: Il Mulino.

INGOLD, Tim
2019   *Making. Antropologia, archeologia, arte e architettura.* Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

MILLER, Daniel
2008   *The comfort of Things.* Cambridge: Polity Press.
2010   *Stuff.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

MORAN, Anne – O'BRIEN, Sorcha
2014   *Love Objects. Emotion, Design and Material Culture.* London and New York: Bloomsbury.

PINK, Sarah
2004   *Home Truths. Gender, domestic objects and everyday life.* Oxford and New York: Berg.

PINK, Sarah – LEDER MACKLEY, Kerstin – MOROSANU, Roxana – MITCHELL, Val – BHAMRA, Tracy
2017   *Making Homes. Ethnography and Design.* London and New York: Bloomsbury.

WEINER, Annette Barbara
1992   *Inalienable Possessions. The Paradox of Keeping-while-Giving.* Berkley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press.

Using technologies. The success of the Bitten Apple in Italy

Franco Lai, *University of Sassari*

ABSTRACT
Since the eighties of the last century onwards, introducing electronic technologies changed working conditions, study, and forms of communication and relationships. In this essay, I intend to talk about the success of Apple products in Italy by referring to the social phenomena related to the use of technologies: their role in daily life, the reasons for a consumer model that has rewarded the intuitive, direct, and friendly approach to the devices. The character of the design with refined shapes, colors, and materials played a powerful role in this model of consumption.

KEYWORDS
Apple, technological innovation, ICT, consumption, social distinction

BIO
Franco Lai is an associate professor of Social Anthropology, Media Anthropology, and Territorial Anthropology at the Department of Humanities of the University of Sassari. His research interests include the uses of communication technologies, globalization and the Anthropocene and the study of the dynamics of socio-environmental change.

lai@uniss.it

Introduction

The essay aims to highlight the reasons responsible for the success of Apple's products in Italy[1]. In Italy, the Apple logo shows, as an Italian entrepreneur claims in an interview, well-made, innovative, and creative products, valuable and efficient from an aesthetic and technic point of view. His words are significant: "I appreciate Lego and Apple a lot. Companies need to experiment more and show that they can sell an experience and a product" (Bennewitz 2019: 21). This qualified opinion refers to how Made in Italy should continue to be. Perhaps today, unlike Steve Jobs' age, Apple and the other massive consumer technology companies no longer produce technological objects that add something new into daily life, leisure, and work, as several observers have argued[2]. In this essay, the use of technologies concerns how various tools of electronic and digital communication become part of ordinary life in various areas: family, friends, and work. They are part of the contemporary material culture objects. The methods of acceptance and use refer to those forms of consumption that reveal processes of social distinction and identity so frequent in industrial society (see Silverstone and Hirsch 1992). These consumptions represent forms of distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1979), so they can communicate a social belonging (see Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Featherstone 1990).

Compared to the previous era, the technologies consumption landscape has become richer and characterized by an offer of objects that are all valuable and performing, as they say. Even in such a varied market, Apple still achieves considerable market shares. However, some specialized sites in recent years report a fallback position of the Apple computers in the market and, the strong competition from Samsung smartphones. Compared to its origins, Apple no longer deals only with computers, but also provides services as a distributor of cultural content and software. According to recent evaluations, the iPhone (56%) is its primary product, followed by the iMac line of computers for only 10% and, for tablets, by the iPads for 9%[3]. In 2018, iMac computers had only 7.3% of the global market, against the largest share owned by brands such as Lenovo, HP, Dell, Acer, Asus, and others with Windows operating system[4]. It had already converted into a company that also sells cultural contents, thus expecting the process of cultural digitalization (music, films, magazines, etc.).[5] Already in Jobs' era, Apple had become a company not only of computers with their operating system but also of other objects. In contrast to what the rhetorical discourse of business communication has been advocating for years, the American federal state has played an influential role in supporting technological innovation, since it has funded basic and applied research in the military and aerospace industry. Apple has over time taken over companies specialized in some technologies along with their patents. For this reason, the economist Mariana Mazzucato argued that there is "The State behind the iPhone" (Mazzucato 2014: 87). Apple has invested in its own online television production business, such as Netflix and Amazon. And long before it had launched the Apple TV device to be connected to televisions to enjoy digital films, TV series, music, etc.

This essay, therefore, wants to interpret the uses and consumption of Apple technologies. If with reason, Thomas Eriksen (2010: vii) has argued that anthropology explores large issues in small places, I will analyze users belonging to the education system and university in the cities of Cagliari and Sassari (Sardinia, Italy). The first is my city of origin, the second is the city where there is the University I work at. It represents my everyday routine where I interact with other teachers and researchers, students, public administrators, freelancers.

I intend to explore the large capitalist enterprise, now delocalized, consumptions in a micro-scale situation to understand the dynamics of large-scale capitalism[6]. In short, I will try to understand how a

---

[1] This essay is part of the research activities of the University of Sassari Research Fund 2020.

[2] For example: Riccardo Luna, *Perché la Apple e diventata noiosa*, in www.repubblica.it/dossier/stazione-futuroriccardo-luna, 10 September 2019 (last accessed 9 June 2020); *The Economist* on a cover of 2013 asked *Will we ever invent anything useful again?* (January 12th 2013).

[3] https://tech.everyeye.it/notizie/apple-calano-vendite-mac-crescita-mercato-pc-421653.html (last accessed 10 June 2020); https://www.digitalic.it/economia-digitale/business/vendite-pc-2018 (last accessed 10 June 2020).

[4] https://mac.iphoneitalia.com/110060/programma-permuta-apple-mac (last accessed 10 June 2020).

[5] For a historical-social overview, see Balbi and Magaudda (2014).

[6] I have collected the suggestions in Miller (1997) when he speaks of "Local-Global" and "Global-Local Companies". In this case we will have a global company with multiple national and local markets. I would dare to say that at the beginning the advertising message was formulated to reach possible Italian buyers; today, from the organization of exhibition spaces to media campaigns, it seems that the message is increasingly interested in "global" and not national or "local" codes and references.

company that has already a wide range of action from its origins can have such a significant impact on consumption on a national and local scale[7].

Aesthetics and function

"Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works"[8]. This direct sentence summarizes Steve Jobs' thought about the aesthetics and usability of Apple techno-objects. In this essay, I intend to show how this principle has become a consumption practice that has embodied the appeal of these products among global customers.

After the event that would have launched the first iPad model in one of the Sardinian stores, young adults and people aged 40-50 await their turn to see and touch the new product up close. According to a scene that I would have seen several other times, the various movements test the ergonomic characteristics of the tablet, a new item. The first experiment concerns the act of zooming in and out photos and maps through the joint movement of the thumb and forefinger; then testing the sensitivity of the retractable virtual keyboard and test the weight and ease of grip. The company is aware of the wonder effect that these gestures produce; in fact, regarding the launch of the new operating system for iOS7 mobile devices, they say: "It's amazing how far you can get with the tip of a finger"[9]. In the corner dedicated to the Bitten Apple inside a large electronics warehouse near Cagliari we witness the same astonishing effect.

Apple storytelling

In corporate storytelling, tactile and sensory elements appear central and it does not consider design a secondary element. It is not a question of simple aesthetic taste; it is a choice of efficiency that seeks to respond to the practical needs of users: "Much of Apple's appeal lies in its belief that design is not something added to the end […]. Design is everything: it's not just how a product appears, but also the way it works and how it makes the user feel" (Mac Magazine, March 2015, p. 38). It is interesting to note Roland Barthes' observations regarding the allure of the Citroën DS car, not for nothing nicknamed the "Déesse". The potential customers or enthusiasts in the showrooms used to examine this car, defined as "a great vintage creation" and "a superlative object", with the touch: "you examine the joint of the glass, you run your hand through the large rubber grooves that connect the rear window to its nickel finish" (Barthes 1957).

Looking at the first Apple advertising posters in Italy, we can get an idea of the meanings that the company attributed to its products. First, they were original and innovative objects. The user's relationship with the device had to be easy, immediate, intuitive, and capable of guaranteeing work efficiency. Another innovative aspect was the possibility offered by these computers to continue working at home. These meanings are part of the spread of personal computers. Computers suitable for everyone and in every home would have led to the democratization of knowledge and technology (see Isaacson 2014).

In the seventies and eighties advertising campaigns a new narrative arrives, *storytelling*, as we would say today[10], in which the approach to the personal computer becomes very 'practical', direct, and intuitive to learn. Because of the shapes, materials, and colors, this approach led to a sensorial and

---

[7] I dealt with the success of Apple technologies in two stages: one around 2014-2015 and then, more recently, in 2018-2019. Research has in various ways required methodological adaptation and flexibility, as Boellstorff (2012: 53-54) argues with regard to the study of social processes produced by digital technologies. This flexibility does not only concern the approach, but also the sources used (Olivier de Sardan, 2014: 71-72). First of all, I did not limit myself to collecting discursive interviews, but in several cases I have had conversations in the course of daily social interaction; conversations which I later transcribed as research notes. During the launching of new products, I visited the sales points to see "live" how people decide what to buy. In these cases too, I have transcribed my observations as research notes. Since I have been a user of computers and other technological objects for over thirty years, especially the Bitten Apple, I cannot say that passions, "obsessions" and uses of technologies are a foreign world to me. During the collection of documentary materials I was interested in advertising materials, journalistic materials and specialized websites.

[8] This statement, which later became very famous, results in an interview with *New York Times* 2003, cf. Walker 2003.

[9] http://www.apple.com/it/ios/ios7/features (last accessed 20 June 2013).

[10] Coming from marketing, storytelling as a tool of persuasion has come to politics in more recent times. The art of telling a story to support the identity of a product and a brand is now part of very skillful use of storytelling also in contemporary politics, as can be seen in Salmon (2007) and Castells (2013).

emotional relationship with the device. A few years ago, some studies of the anthropology of advertising noted that producers must open up a space for action in a market with a plurality of similar goods. The aesthetic line and the corporate narrative create meanings that must make the identity of a brand recognizable (see Malefyt and Morais 2012: 60, 66-67, 99-100). For example, in some advertising posters dating back to the launch of the Apple II in Italy, one of the first and most famous models, the text reads:

> It all started less than three years ago. Yet there are already thousands in Italy who love the Apple […]. The apple solves the problems. All of them.
> Now, if you want to taste one, come to one of the over 200 Iret dealers. They are heaven on earth for those who love apples.
>
> With its simplicity and versatility, Apple speaks a universal language. Not for nothing, in the world, there are over 700,000 owners of an Apple personal computer.
> Apple computers do their utmost to satisfy your whims […]. Thus the new Apple, which you can find in over three hundred demonstration and sales centers in Italy, not only offers more RAM and greater ease of use, but also an Italian keyboard.
> The new Apple speaks and writes in your language: at work, you will have a partner who understands your problems better and solves them sooner; a sociable companion with an all-Italian fantasy in your study and free time[11].

After about forty years, the company no longer needs to show how innovative, intuitive, and efficient its products are. But even today the advertising message continues to emphasize the practical and versatile nature of the technological objects of the Bitten Apple at work, in daily life, in sports and the outdoors, in photography and video shooting[12]. The company storytelling refers to the artisanal and, technological quality of these products, emphasizing that, although they are objects made in China, they are still the result of Californian creativity:

> It is this / What matters is this. / How do you experience a product? / How do you feel with it […].
> We are engineers and artists. / Artisans and inventors. / And we sign our work. / You may not notice this. / But you will always feel it. / This is our signature. / And it means everything.
> Designed by Apple in California[13].

Friendly devices

The distinction between the place of manufacture and the place of design appears as a characteristic of the goods of the major global brands which delocalize their production (see Redini 2008). In particular, products such as the iPhone result from an assembly carried out in Chinese factories based on components from various other manufacturers but built around a design that has its bases in Cupertino, California (Xing and Detert 2010).

Following the studies in the anthropology of design, we could say that there is a relevant theoretical core: how they create the context of use and meaning, how the sensorial and bodily relationship with technological objects develops (see Otto and Smith 2013). These aspects take shape in conversations and interviews during working and daily life, as Mario, a university professor of physics, says about notebooks: "The design had a crucial role. All devices are beautiful; you are pleased to have a beautiful object (…). The design matters, but it matters above all because the design also means robustness. (…). They make their devices of aluminum". Other people have also pointed out how people can see these computers as elements of furniture at home, because of the materials and design.

In the first half of the eighties, Alberto was one of the first people I know to buy a Macintosh. Later, he opted for Windows-based computers for his researches. In the interview, he recalls how important it was to the market an object with such strong and innovative aesthetic characteristics compared to the more conventional ones of most of the first PCs.

> The design has been a crucial point when Steve Jobs returned and Apple invented the colored iMac.

---

[11] This advertising campaign dates back to the early 1980s.
[12] TV commercials are all visible on YouTube.
[13] Advertisement that appeared in *la Repubblica*, 11 July 2013, p. 28-29.

> This represented the resurgence of Apple; because he, who had a sharp sixth sense, realized that the computer had become an important piece of furniture in every home […]. Once the Internet spread, people started using computers more […]; as long as the computers remained the old ones, there was no reason to buy a new one. Nobody bought them, so the market was waning a bit, it was shrinking. The iMac was an ingenious invention; as soon as I saw it I said wow! I have to buy it back; in fact, I had already switched to Windows […] but I liked it, so I bought [laughs]. However, there was this revolutionary design, which, I repeat there has always been, because I remember it when the Apple II came out. This gadget struck many and me...it was cute! One thing already differentiated it: it was white. All the others were dark, dark gray, this was white!

Even the iPhone, later technological device, combines aesthetics and efficiency. Also in this case, we cannot separate aesthetics from functionality, as emerges in this conversation with a couple between fifty and sixty years old. He is a freelancer and she is a teacher, who have long been exclusive users of Apple computers:

> So far design has always been an element that distinguishes Apple products from others, even though you don't show your iMac around. But this is because when you like something you want to use it.
>
> When you have an iPhone…the fact that some early versions had rounded edges made them even more comfortable to hold. A friend of ours has model 3, which is not so flat; and she didn't change it for this reason, because she prefers rounded-edges enjoyable to the touch. I don't know why they changed the round edges… […] these are things Jobs was very careful about.

Apple users consider the iPhone multifunctional, although the price, from a certain point of view and for a certain period, has placed this object among the luxury and superfluous goods. Another teacher argues with irony:

> With the iPhone, you can do a lot of things, including making phone calls. It is simple and intuitive to use. It has many applications for various uses. When I travel, I load a film to watch on the plane, setting the airplane function. I can also take pictures; the camera is nothing special but as it is a mobile phone it's fine. Then I jot all the appointments down. The battery has a good life. With the fact that a new mobile comes out every year, you adapt. It costs a lot. Some people spend money on a new watch or a jewel. Me for the iPhone. What's wrong?

In the days of the iPhone 6 launch, I went to visit some large distribution centers near Cagliari. Again, several people took some iPhone samples, one on the left hand, the other on the right, as if to test their ergonomics, weight, thickness, etc. Another recurring gesture was to see if the thumb in its opposable position covered the surface of the touchscreen along the vertical and horizontal lines of the display. The design responds to questions of efficiency rather than aesthetics, as some young users seemed to argue regarding the iPhone 5, the latest model at the time of the interview. A student said:

> The design in Apple products is very important, even to the touch, when you touch the surface of computers or other products. The iPhone 3GS is unbeatable in terms of design, it is much more elegant than the most recent models.

Regarding these implications, a computer scientist from a specialized shop in Cagliari told me: "To put it in a nutshell, an Apple computer is components plus design". According to this computer scientist, what differentiates the products of the Bitten Apple is the care for the design, since they supply the components by the same manufacturers who then proceed with the assembly (Xing and Detert 2010).

As is common knowledge, however, the aesthetics in Apple products have not only involved the hardware but also the software. During an interview, the person, who at the time was a junior researcher, recalls: "We were all fascinated by the graphic interface, the icons, and because to delete a file it was enough to drag it to the garbage can". In the eighties, the graphic interface already was one of the salient aspects intended to produce astonishment also because in a sector dominated by MS-DOS, it existed only in Macintosh computers.

Thus, it could happen that being users of one or the other system almost characterized a person's socio-cultural identity. Sherry Turkle claims that on the one hand there were users who wanted a

computer with a playful and direct approach; there were users who preferred MS-DOS because they were interested in the internal functioning of the operating system and the PC (Turkle 1997). In some respects, this polarization continues even today, despite the spread of the graphic interface in all techno-objects. According to one of the first Macintosh enthusiasts at the University of Cagliari, in the early eighties, these computers had already spread to the university, while remaining a niche:

> I don't know how many users were but there were only a hundred people, maybe fifty. There was only one shop in town.
> [...] When I used it for the first time, MacPaint stunned me. It was a kind of revelation, how could I call it, a miracle because as soon as you used it you saw the eraser that erased, the pen that wrote; I said to myself: this is how a computer should be, is it possible that no one has thought of it before? [...]. In those days it was another world, another planet [...].

In these considerations, it often comes into play the fact that you can work and use a computer for a long time without having to worry about how to maintain its system functionality since Apple users consider Apple computers more reliable than PCs with MS-DOS and Windows. Over time, the use of a system deemed more dependable and "friendly" becomes a habit and the preference becomes exclusive. The company's corporate philosophy has always considered the 'closed' hardware and software system a positive aspect. It aims at offering a guarantee of quality to customers given the greater stability in the software functionality (see Isaacson 2011). Specialized sites and newspapers discussed the usual mania of the Bitten Apple for its products total control. The manufacturer, however, considers its guarantee of reliability, the true and main aspect of the relationship with customers (see Dini 2008: 141). According to the specialized press, the move to the Mac could also represent a 'style choice' far from Windows users[14].

iPad, an object of multiform uses

When Apple launched the iPad on the Italian market in January 2010 the comments were very similar. Several readers said they disapproved of this recent case of consumerism in a phase of economic crisis. Exaggerated consumerism appeared to be the prime suspect due to the night vigils that also took place in various Italian cities to have the new technological object first.

> It's a very well-advertised luxury item that will make people spend a lot of money for nothing. Well done!

> I've been using Apple for 20 years, and I'm attracted to iPad. All Apple items are easy to access and use; however, everything is closed to what is not Apple and... I can't accept it! [...] for now, I choose the competitor, and I keep the netbook, [...] it is more versatile and - less cult object, and still nice; and then it makes me feel less disciplined, and nowadays is no small thing [...].

> Dunno... I don't understand all these absurd comments. Soon for work, I will have to travel a lot, at least 3-4 hours almost every day. I travel by public transport, metro, and train, and an iPad is very convenient for me [...][15].

Later, some research confirmed that the use of the iPad had merged regarding mobility. In 2011, the object was among the most desired as a possible Christmas gift; everybody saw it as complementary to the computer[16].

In this return to the direct use of the hand on the technical device, I see some implications of two original authors' thoughts, André Leroi-Gourhan and Marshall McLuhan. The tool extends the hand and the tool is almost 'oozing' from the hand itself; it incorporates the tools into the gestures and techniques of the body (cf. Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Parlebas 1999: 37). Marshall McLuhan states that

---

[14] Switch to Mac, a choice of style, *Mac Magazine Speciale*, 2009, n . 1, p. 2-3.
[15] The comments concern an article on www.repubblica.it, *Il D-day dell'iPad è arrivato*, by Vittorio Zucconi, 28 May 2010 (last accessed 30 May 2010).
[16] Research on 2011 data published on the site www.nielsen.com/it (last accessed 30 December 2012); see also Bianchi, Longo, 2010; Longo, 2011.

media extend the body and the senses (cf. McLuhan 1964). Amid human evolution, the relationship between the capabilities of the hand and technology has developed in specific ways. The gesture of the hand in direct motility, "la main en motricité directe" (Leroi-Gourhan 1965: 41), does without the use of the mouse reproducing a very natural gesture with the direct action of the index finger on the touchscreen or the combined action of the index finger and thumb to enlarge or reduce the image on the screen. From this point of view, technological innovation would not have produced a demanualized technicality ("une technicité démanualisée") imagined by Leroi-Gourhan (1965: 62) as the destiny of the industrial world. Instead, we can think the touchscreen in smartphones and tablets has brought the use of the hand back into play in new technologies. For the models of the last few years, it is possible to draw and use the tablet with a pen as if it were a notebook and to 'imitate' the nuances in the pen's pressure on the touchscreen. Everybody knows Steve Jobs' interest in the aesthetic aspects of writing, as we also know it he did not have a particular passion for handhelds, as evidenced by the fate of the Newton model in the 1990s, which the company took out of production. But, as soon as technological innovation has created the basis for a more functional product, technicians have designed objects capable of intercepting social uses (See Isaacson 2011; Mazzucato 2013; see D'Alessandro 2013) [17].

The advertising campaign already from the first model showed the iPad as a multipurpose object: reading, writing, preparing presentations, watching videos, listening to music, connecting to the Internet; sitting at a desk or holding the tablet on your lap, but also lying down or relaxed in a train seat or at home. Instead, outdoor use in sunlight was difficult because of the reflections on the display.

After the purchase of the first iPad model, I used to show it to colleagues at the department or in the garden, sitting on a bench to check emails. A colleague close to retirement made me understand the effectiveness of the 'wow effect', the surprise effect that these technologies produced at the beginning (see Gatti 2010). He told me he would never forget what he felt when touching the touchscreen for the first time and trying the gestures of enlarging and shrinking the image and leafing through the pages of a book in digital format. The possibility to touch the screen with your fingers appeared to be the most fascinating aspect. The Italian newspaper *la Repubblica*, after the initial day of sales in the United States, reported: "A perfect screen. You write with your fingers. Now the iPad is a reality" (Rampini 2010: 17). I do not exclude that imitative dynamics follow the process of diffusion of ideas and therefore also of technological and cultural innovations like a process of 'contagion' (see Sperber 1996). I thought it appropriate to rediscover Dan Sperber's "contagion of ideas" theme in the words of a colleague who, showing me her iPad Mini, said: "See? You infected me…when I saw you with your iPad mini I thought I wanted one too… it's a drug…".

The company's narrative has always emphasized how the design of these technological objects had to respond to the criteria of essentiality, simplicity, and intuitiveness, as in an aesthetic "lightness". Features already present in the design of the early years (see Esslinger 2014). The well-known English designer Jonathan Ive, put into practice the principles of a design that had to combine aesthetics, knowledge of materials, and functionality of products (see Isaacson 2011). It is appropriate to say that the "aesthetic" comes "from meeting functionality with form" (Dorfles 2001: 15). And, as Molotch claimed, in technical objects, aesthetics and handling come together to become one (see Molotch 2005). In anthropological research, this issue is very familiar. Here, the communication techno-objects show functional and symbolic aesthetics as inseparable and complementary dimensions of the artifacts of several material cultures (see Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Cirese 1998: 15-16).

In 2010 I found a statement by the Italian writer Alessandro Baricco interesting when he defined "the world of Apple and touch technology childish" (Baricco 2010: 1). In a short time, after the spread of the iPad, other similar products made their entry into the panorama of technological consumption. In the 1980s it was not uncommon to meet someone who called the Apple GUI a thing for children. Since the touchscreen has spread, even at two or three, children learn intuitively and by imitation how to launch applications, scroll and zoom in or out on the photos on the screen, etc.

These technologies play a fundamental role in supporting life on the move not only for their portability, but also introducing wireless networks for data traffic, and for the 'traditional' voice traffic. Some scholars have also noticed that smartphones and tablets allow you to always have your 'emotional world' with you: family photos and videos, music, etc. Elliott and Urry have defined these technologies

---

[17] The Newton Message Pad, a handheld, was marketed by Apple in 1993 (sold in various models until 1998). It allowed handwriting recognition and speech recognition, but was not very successful for various reasons. It has been called "the father of the iPhone and iPad" (in Ecco il device dal quale ha preso le mosse il progetto iPhone, in *Le mie apps*, n. 2, 2010, p. 12).

as 'miniaturized mobility', which have now become central to the mobile life of men and women (Elliott and Urry 2010). As for the use of the iPhone, but by extension we should apply it to all similar devices, Sherry Turkle highlighted that for many people it represents an "existential archive" (Turkle 2017). These are a series of technical possibilities inherent in technological developments in the sector and that were already present in the early days of wireless technology for both conventional telephone and messaging use. It is necessary to remember the powerful role of the diffusion of cell phones for family micro-coordination functions (see Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu and Sey, 2009). As for the iPad, uses on the move accompany uses, let's say, relaxed in an armchair, on the sofa or in bed to read, watch videos on YouTube, read books and magazines. E-book readers are, from this point of view, much more comfortable for reading; but several people said they also adapted to reading lying down with a tablet, a reading practice that is easier with a book which, not for nothing, Umberto Eco defined as a perfect object. A decade ago Gino Roncaglia faced this problem. Roncaglia believed that the destiny of the tablet or e-book reader depends on its use, distinguishing between *lean forward* and *lean back* use:

> *Lean forward* occurs when we are 'leaning forward' towards information, as we do by writing, studying a book sitting at the desk [...], or working on the computer. It refers to the active use of information: we do not just absorb information but we process it [...].
> The *lean-back* mode refers to a relaxed use, 'leaning backward' (for example, in an armchair) [...]. (Roncaglia 2010: 14, 15).

Unlike digital book readers, tablets are multifunctional objects, not only aimed at reading (see Mance, Shubber, and Bond 2015: 112). However, they have also adapted to relaxed use and *lean back*, as a university professor states:

> I use it to read emails and to read books, but for writing, I use the computer. [...] The tablet everywhere, even in an armchair or on the desk; it is so flexible that you can even stand up on the sofa or in the armchair and it is very comfortable, even in bed [...].

Because of the weight that tablets had until a few years ago, sometimes the preferences went to other tablets, as Alberto and Stefano claim:

> Not being able to read at night is a pain for me [...]. I also have photographs of my wife and children on my tablet, but I use it for reading. [...] they had the good idea of making the iPad mini; for me, this is the ideal format for reading in bed [...].

> The iPad in an armchair or even in bed, do you know how many documentaries I've seen in bed? Because once you have a home network it is very convenient [...]. I thought I would use it much more like an electronic book. [...] However, the paper book is unbeatable [...].

In other cases, they highlight the versatility of the iPad as a multifunctional object at work, in leisure time, and on vacation. As for reading, the tablet makes it clear how digitization has given rise to a third historical revolution reading (see Cavallo and Chartier 2001: 37). The testimonies collected suggest that in the search for preferential postures for reading with a tablet, people try to adopt those already gained with the book: outdoors, on the sofa, at the desk, in bed, etc. (Petrucci 2001: 453-454).

Wearable technological objects
Alberto, thinking back to the years of Macintosh debut and the enthusiasm it could arise when he was a junior researcher, today claims, with a certain self-irony:

> I think it depends on the fact that Apple had 'loyalized' its users, because at the beginning, the difference between Macintoshes and IBMs was, as I told you, so profound that those who used the Macintosh felt [smiles] superior, I don't know how to define it. Everybody felt like a member of a sect, I don't know how to say [laughs], part of an elite of privileged people who used the Mac.

As for the younger age groups, some say that consumption has a high social value in the so-called mobile youth cultures (Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu, and Sey 2009). Wireless communication tools

such as cell phones, smartphones, and, more recently, tablets (with all their accessories) are not only portable devices but have become objects with strong characterizations in the sense of wearability. (Castells, Fernàndez-Ardèvol, Qiu and Sey 2009). The iPod, among these, confirms the fact that we can look at, touch and wear these objects (see Dini 2008: 93). Forms of 'consumerism' manifest themselves with the periodic replacement of the device and with the choice of accessories such as cases, covers, etc., even at a high price, presented as elegant objects. The launch of the Apple Watch (March 2015) made this trend now clear: technological objects have now become "wearable" (see Chiusi 2015: 35).

The style of consumption characterized by the cult of the brand is not predominant in most Apple users. But for many people, belonging to some indefinable form of youth and metropolitan mobile culture, it appears as an act endowed with meaning within a social context focused to the spectacularization of consumption (cfr Codeluppi 2007: 49). The media from all over the industrial world have given news of the rows of people waiting for the Apple Store to open to buy the very first specimens. For a bizarre imitative process, these night vigils seem to have taken place even when no lines were necessary. In one case local media interpreted it as an out-of-scale and out-of-place 'being global'[18].

Apple launched the last of its products, the smartwatch, in September 2014; it is now in its fifth series and it is part of the wearable electronic technologies. The Apple Watch was first related to sports activities, today it also functions as health monitoring with the control of cardiovascular indicators. I have observed in various situations the way users make a choice, given that it was a new object and without other reference examples on the market. As it has happened for smartphones and tablets, the choice is very wide. On an autumn day in 2018, I visited the area assigned to Apple in an electronics shopping center near Cagliari. A couple in their forties is stationing like me at the smartwatch counter. The woman tries all models from 3 to 4 in various configurations, 38, 40, and 44 mm, including the colors of the straps. She tried the three models on her wrist one by one, to check their wearability. She is undecided about the color of the watch and strap. The saleswoman asks which iPhone model she owns. The man replies saying that he has them all from 4 onwards except for the last two models (he laughed at how women follow trends). The shop assistant says that now they last about a year and a half, then you need to update or change them. The man says to his wife: "Let your aesthetic sense guide your choice". The woman is hesitant, she tries again the straps as if they were a pair of shoes that must fit well, and then decides for the 38 mm model with a black case with and pink strap. Later, I would have seen this combination many times on the wrist of young women. Also in the fall of 2018, I discussed it with various people, as I saw Apple Watches were becoming more and more. Maria wears the Apple Watch on her right wrist, a small vintage watch on the left. She uses two different watches because the one on her left wrist is a gift from her husband and she's always keen to wear it. She says she cannot help using the Apple Watch, an expression used as a mantra by many people. It's so wearable, she argues, that you forget you're wearing it; they do not make the band of some stinging materials and it is not a problem having it close-fitting. Roberto also wears two watches, but in an inverted position. On the left wrist the Apple Watch, on the right another watch. The smartwatch is a gift from his wife and he uses it when he goes for a run; he uses the watch on the right wrist to always have the time available. In a specialized shop, they told me that more and more their customers wear the two watches at the same time. Some technical aspects of smartphones come into play, as the limited duration of the charge; we cannot exclude it then becomes a habit and that users always intend to have a watch with them that does not require recharging. In other cases, as it appears most today (2020), the Apple Watch is the only device on the wrist. A student also favors this use because the smartwatch communicates with the iPhone and notifies incoming calls and messages. She shows me some functions, in particular, that of pulse control; then she takes it off to let me feel the lightness and touch impressions of the strap material. In several cases, I have witnessed these tactile and sensory tests of the materials, both of the cases and the straps. A saleswoman claims that she never used the watch before and that now, instead, she even forgets she is wearing it because it is not heavy and the strap does not cause skin irritation. She claims that customers' favorite colors are space gray and black, but also white for certain models. As for the colors during the conversation, a gender component emerges. She claims that men dislike pink and adds: "I would never suggest pink to men!" I think the question of colors for males or females belongs to the

---

[18] In Sassari on the shop window announcing the sales of the new iPad from midnight to dawn, in March 2012 someone put up a small sign that reads: "Mi chi no semmu a Niu Iork", "Look, we're not in New York" (cfr. *L'iPad? Arriva a mezzanotte in città*, in www.sassarinotizie.com, 23 March 2012, last accessed 6 June 2012).

gender stereotypes widespread in various ways and at various levels in human societies (see Strathern 2016).

Conclusions

As we have seen, the success of Apple technologies is because of a powerful combination of aesthetics and functionality. At the beginning of the eighties, other computers appeared not very original in color and design and with an interface was not as intuitive. With Apple computers, the narrative is very different: a personal computer is a work tool that should be present in every home and every office; these technologies are easy to understand and master.

Looking even today at the second-hand prices of the models of thirty years ago one can understand the diffusion of a distinctive taste for these devices. Like other brands of global diffusion, the Bite Apple logo, first the one with colored stripes then the one with the unmistakable white, promises a special experience that starts with the care of the packaging and the way of extraction. Like other global brands, if not more, the Bitten Apple logo and its founders have become true 'pop icons'[19]. Other technological objects of our daily life - radios, TVs, record players, discs, gramophones, portable record players, etc. - have now become "memories of media", to use the expression by Roger Silverstone (1999: 93). In some interviews carried out a few years ago, some students stated that they did not want to get rid of, for example, an initial model of the iPhone, that of series 3, considered, with its rounded shapes, much more ergonomic and "beautiful" than the next more advanced models. The time limit therefore of the devotion to Apple computers, has been further shortened, so much so that some websites have reported the growth in price among collectors passionate about 2013-2014 computers [20].

FIGURE 1: Working at home (launching of Apple II, about 1977)

---

[19] Cfr. Codeluppi 2012; Magaudda 2012; Wozniak 2013.
[20] Some MacBook Airs and Pros from a few years ago have officially become 'vintage', in http://it.mashable.com, 19 May 2020 (last accessed 10 June 2020).

FIGURE 2: Italian advertising for the launching of Apple II: Apple speaks Italian

FIGURE 3: "Drink Different", Italian imitation of the Apple advertising
campaign "Think Different" (coffee bar in Cagliari, Italy, 2017)

REFERENCES

BALBI, Gabriele – MAGAUDDA, Paolo
2014   *Storia dei media digitali. Rivoluzioni e continuità*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

BARICCO, Alessandro
2010   Il mondo senza nome dei nuovi barbari. *la Repubblica*, September 21: 1, 56.

BARTHES, Roland
1957   *Mitologies*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

BENNEWITZ, Sara
2019   Il segreto è reinventarsi. L'Italia investa sul futuro e le imprese cresceranno. *la Repubblica*, April 6: 21.

BIANCHI, Federica – LONGO, Alessandro
2010   iPad mania. *l'Espresso*, September 23, 2010: 76-81.

BOELLSTORFF, Tom
2012   *Rethinking Digital Anthropology*. In *Digital Anthropology*. Heather A. Horst – Daniel Miller (eds). London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 39-60.

BOURDIEU, Pierre
1979   *La distinction*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

CASTELLS, Manuel – FERNÀNDEZ-ARDÈVOL, Mireia – LINCHUAN QIU, Jack – SEY, Araba
2009   *Mobile communication and Society. A Global Perspective*. Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press.

CASTELLS, Manuel
2013   *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CAVALLO, Guglielmo – CHARTIER, Roger
2001   *Introduction*. In *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*. Guglielmo Cavallo – Roger Chartier (eds). Paris: Éditions du Seuil. Pp. 7-49.

CHIUSI, Fabio
2015   La nuova sfida Hi-Tech da indossare. *la Repubblica*, March 10: 35.

CODELUPPI, Vanni
2007   *La vetrinizzazione sociale. Il processo di spettacolarizzazione degli individui e della società*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
2012   *Il potere della marca. Disney, McDonald's, Nike e le altre*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

D'ALESSANDRO, Jaime
2013   In punta di penna (digitale). *la Repubblica*, May 18: 36.

DINI, Antonio
2008   *Emozione Apple. Fabbricare sogni nel XXI secolo*. Milano: Edizioni Il Sole 24 Ore.

DORFLES, Gillo
2001   *Introduzione al disegno industriale*. Torino: Einaudi.

DOUGLAS Mary – ISHERWOOD, Baron
1979   *The World of Goods*. New York: Basic Books.

ELLIOTT, Anthony – URRY, John
2010   *Mobile Lives*. London: Routledge.

ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland
2010   *Small Places, Large Issues. An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.

ESSLINGER, Hartmut
2014   *Keep It Simple. The Early Design Years of Apple*. Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers.

FEATHERSTONE, Mike
1990   *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. New York: Sage.

GATTI, Claudio
2010   New York racconta l'iPad-story. *Il Sole 24 Ore*, April 6: 26.

ISAACSON, Walter
2011   *Steve Jobs: The Exclusive Biography*. London: Little, Brown Book Group.
2014   *The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers, Geniuses, and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

LEROI-GOURHAN, André
1965   *Le geste et la parole. II. La mémoire et les rythmes.* Paris: Albin Michel.

LONGO, Alessandra
2011   iPad. E tu come lo usi?. *l'Espresso*, January 27: 100-101.

MAGAUDDA, Paolo
2012   *Innovazione Pop. Nanotecnologie, scienziati e invenzioni nella popular culture*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

MALEFYT, Timothy De Waal – MORAIS Robert J.
2012   *Advertising and Anthropology. Ethnographic Practice and Cultural Perspectives*. London: Berg.

MANCE, Henry – SHUBBER, Kadhim – BOND, Shannon
2015   Lunga vita al libro. *l'Espresso*, February 13: 110-113.

MAZZUCATO, Mariana
2013   *The Entrepreunerial State*. London: Anthem Press.

McLUHAN, Marshall
1964   *Understanding Media*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

MILLER, Daniel
1997   *Capitalism. An Ethnographic Approach*. Berg: Oxford.

MOLOTCH Harvey
2005   *Where Stuff Comes from: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers, and Many Other Things Come to Be as They Are*. London: Routledge.

OLIVIER DE SARDAN, Jean-Pierre
2014   *La rigueur du qualitatif. Les contraints empiriques de l'interpretation socio-anthropologiques*, Lovain-la-neuve: Bruylant-Academia.

OTTO, Ton – SMITH, Rachel Charlotte
2013   Design Anthropology: A Distinct Style of Knowing. In *Design Anthropology. Theory and Practice*. Wendy Gunn – Ton Otto – Rachel Charlotte Smith (eds). London: Bloomsbury. Pp 1-29.

PARLEBAS, Pierre
1999   Les tactiques du corps. In *Approches de la culture matérielle* Marie-Pierre Julien – Jean-Pierre Warnier (eds). Paris: L'Harmattan. Pp. 29-44.

PETRUCCI, Armando
2001   Lire pour lire : un avenir pour la lecture. In *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*. Guglielmo Cavallo – Roger Chartier (eds). Paris: Éditions du Seuil. Pp. 431-457.

RAMPINI, Federico
2010   Uno schermo perfetto io ci scrivo con le dita. Ora l'iPad è realtà. *la Repubblica*, April 4, 2010: 17.

REDINI, Veronica
2008   *Frontiere del "made in Italy". Delocalizzazione produttiva e identità delle merci*. Verona: Ombre corte.

RONCAGLIA, Gino
2010   *La quarta rivoluzione. Sei lezioni sul futuro del libro*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

SALMON, Christian
2007   *Storytelling. La machine à fabriquer des histoires et à formater les ésprits*, Paris: Éditions de la Découverte.

SILVERSTONE, Roger – HIRSCH, Eric
1992   Introduction. In *Consuming Technologies. Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*. Roger Silverstone – Eric Hirsch (eds). London: Routledge. Pp. 1-11.

SILVERSTONE, Roger
1999   *Why Study the Media?* London: Sage.

SPERBER, Dan
1996   *La contagion des idées*. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob.

STRATHERN, Marilyn
2016   *Before and after Gender. Sexual Mythologies of Everyday Life*. Chicago: Hau Books.

TURKLE, Sherry
1997   *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
2017   *Alone Together. Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, New York: Basic Books.

WALKER, Rob
2003   The Guts of a New Machine, November 30, 2003. *The New York Times*
        https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/30/magazine/the-guts-of-a-new-machine.html
        accessed August 30, 2020

WOZNIAK, Steve
2013   *I, Woz: Computer Geek to Cult Icon: Getting to the Core of Apple's Inventor*, London: Headline, iBook edition.

XING, Yuqing – DETERT Neal C.
2010   *How iPhone Widens the US Trade Deficits with PRC*, GRIPS Discussion Paper 10-21, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Tokyo, Japan.
        http://www3.grips.ac.jp/~pinc/data/10-21.pdf
        accessed November 3, 2011

The Ferrara school of cinema[1]

Giuseppe Scandurra, *University of Ferrara*

ABSTRACT
The object of this article is a network of intellectuals in Ferrara between the early 1950s and the late 1980s which produced a series of visual works outside and inside the city - in painting, photography, cinema, video art - difficult to classify. At the basis of the work of this generation of intellectuals there was a transdisciplinary point of view where the separations between disciplines were less evident, also considering the absence of humanistic faculties and the institution of the first anthropology chair in Ferrara only in the first decade of the new millennium. The question at the center of this article is: before the birth of an anthropology chair, how could urban scholars and artists produce visual hybrid works with a shared anthropological view?

BIO
He teaches Cultural Anthropology in the Department of Human Studies - University of Ferrara. He has published numerous essays on the subject of urban anthropology. Among his most recent publications, *Tifo Estremo* (Manifestolibri, 2016) and *Bologna che cambia* (Ed. Junior, 2017). He is currently conducting research on the relationship between anthropology and literature. Member of the Scientific Committee of the Gramsci Institute Emilia-Romagna and founding member of the group of trans-disciplinary study "Tracce Urbane" – http://tracceurbane.org. Director (with A. Alietti) of the "Laboratory of Studi Urbani" – University of Ferrara – http://stum.unife.it/ricerca/laboratori/lsu. Director (with C. Cellamare) of the "Italian Journal of Urban Studies" – https://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/TU/index. Director (with B. Pizzo and G. Pozzi) of the imprint "Territori" – http://www.editpress.it/cms/collane/territori.

giuseppe.scandurra@unife.it

[1] Il presente contributo non è stato sottoposto al processo di double-blind review, ma alla sola lettura da parte della Redazione della rivista.

La 'scuola' ferrarese di cinema[2]
1. Ferrara prima dei Grandi Eventi

> C'è stato un pensiero antropologico, ma non sulla città. Il cuore del rapporto tra artisti e la città è stato sempre rivolto al Delta e alle condizioni dei suoi abitanti. (Cazzola, storico ferrarese, giugno 2018)

Maria Antonietta Trasforini è una delle poche sociologhe dell'ateneo ferrarese che ha concentrato il suo sguardo analitico sul territorio ferrarese nella contemporaneità. Nel saggio *La città d'arte come oggetto culturale. Ferrara: uno studio di cultura urbana* (2001), la sociologa ripercorre le tappe attraverso cui il capoluogo estense diventa, dalla fine degli anni '80, una 'città di cultura' tanto da essere riconosciuta nel 1995 dall'Unesco come città d'arte. Il saggio di Trasforini riesce a fare sintesi di questo di passaggio avvenuto durante l'Amministrazione Soffritti[3] evidenziando come tale percorso fosse già cominciato negli anni Cinquanta. Un percorso che avrà culmine con la stagione dei 'grandi eventi' culturali, "la cui immagine amplificata e moltiplicata dai media nazionali e internazionali ha fatto della città di Ferrara un riconoscibile e prestigioso attore culturale" (*Ivi*: 251).

Trasforini prende in analisi soprattutto l'aspetto istituzionale di tale produzione, intendendo per politiche culturali "quel processo di produzione di oggetti culturali che, mediante la mobilitazione di risorse economiche, simboliche e apparati organizzativi, costruisce (nuovi) confini simbolici sia fra una città e il suo esterno che all'interno della stessa cultura urbana, costituendo nuovi pubblici e/o accentuando la stratificazione di quelli esistenti" (*Ivi*: 250). Attraverso questo processo, per la sociologa, Ferrara negli anni Novanta diviene una 'città immateriale', ovvero una città d'arte come luogo immaginario della cultura globale e locale "depositaria di una memoria collettiva continuamente reinterpretata e reinventata da chi la visita e da chi la abita" (*Ibidem*).

Per Trasforini saranno due le grandi azioni pubbliche promosse dall'amministrazione comunale che segneranno l'apice di questo percorso. La prima riguarderà "i grandi processi di conservazione, di recupero urbano, ma soprattutto di tutela del territorio" (*Ivi:* 252); la seconda, invece, la trasformazione di un modello di politiche culturali che aveva caratterizzato la città a partire dagli anni Sessanta – Trasforini ne parla come di "un caso di *welf-art state*" (*Ibidem*) – in una macchina economica che richiamerà in città maggior flussi turistici.

Il progetto di recupero delle Mura sarà realizzato dall'Amministrazione nel 1986 e mirerà al recupero e alla conservazione della cerchia di mura cinquecentesche che circonda la città. Tale processo di riscoperta delle Mura avrà un grande ruolo nel dare alla città un'"antica/nuova identità" (*Ivi*: 253). Il rifacimento della cintura muraria, per Trasforini, non scatenerà solo un processo di ripensamento dello spazio urbano, ma un'opera di ricostruzione di "memoria collettiva... termine spesso usato al posto di tradizione... che rivela come il passato sia continuamente reinterpretato in funzione dei mutevoli bisogni del presente" (Peterson 1994, in Trasforini 2001: 183). Accanto a questa grande azione, la volontà politica sarà quella di dare vita alla stagione dei 'grandi eventi', ovvero voler fare dell'investimento in cultura una forma di investimento economico con ricadute sull'occupazione – soprattutto nel settore commerciale e turistico – assumendosi, l'amministrazione comunale, il ruolo "di vero e proprio imprenditore" (Trasforini 2001: 254). I dati riportati dalla ricerca condotta dalla sociologa e pubblicata nel 2001 – quando il sindaco Soffritti terminerà il suo ultimo mandato e si strutturerà definitivamente un nuovo modello di città in virtù della nuova immagine ufficiale e riconosciuta di "città d'arte e di cultura" – sono significativi:

> L'indicatore più evidente è la spesa comunale in cultura, che dal 1983 al 1993 passa da 6,6 a 24,7 miliardi di lire (pari, rispettivamente, al 3,4% e al 7,6 % dei bilanci nei due anni, con una punta nel 1990 pari all'8,9%) […]. Risorse decisamente elevate se paragonate agli investimenti delle altre città

---

[2] Questo articolo è frutto di una ricerca iniziata nel 2018 e pubblicata nel 2020 con titolo "Ibridi Ferraresi. L'antropologia in una città senza antropologi" (Scandurra 2020). Alcune interviste citate in questo testo sono state inserite nella monografia del 2020.

[3] Soffritti, prima come assessore, poi come Sindaco, ha praticamente guidato l'amministrazione comunale di Ferrara dai primi anni Ottanta fino alla fine dei Novanta.

italiane dove, in quegli anni, raramente questo valore supera il 3%. […] Il primato di Ferrara si
traduce, nel 1993, anche in un elevato valore pro capite della spesa cittadina in cultura: 180.711 lire
a Ferrara […] contro un valore medio delle altre città emiliane compreso fra le 80.000 e le 92.000
lire. (*Ibidem*)

Ora, scrive Trasforini nel 2001 concentrando il suo sguardo di ricerca sul capoluogo estense,
l'imprenditore culturale è un professionista che deve selezionare prodotti all'interno di un mercato
nazionale e internazionale fortemente competitivo, obbligato a mettere in atto una programmazione di
lungo periodo e a disporre di una complessa organizzazione operativa: in sintesi "dotato di una forte
sensibilità e attenzione ai media e alla cultura come bene di consumo di massa, esso/a si trova nella
necessità/possibilità di usarla come potente risorsa economica e non solo simbolica" (*Ibidem*). Un cambio
di interpretazione del ruolo che prenderà piede soprattutto negli anni Duemila, quando si svilupperanno
strutture, quali Ferrara Arte e Ferrara Musica, proprio al fine di smarcarsi dall'apparato burocratico-
amministrativo nell'organizzazione degli eventi culturali[4].

Il carattere fortemente spettacolare dell'iniziativa; l'ambizione, il più delle volte realizzata, di una
forte visibilità sui media; e infine un forte richiamo di pubblico. […] il pubblico del 'Grande evento'
non è di massa e indifferenziato, come nelle ambizioni dell'epoca effimera, ma è di volta in volta
cercato, mirato, corteggiato. È insomma il cittadino cosmopolita dei media. (*Ivi*: 258)

Trasforini, analizzando i dati quantitativi di una ricerca condotta a fine Ottanta sul pubblico
visitatore dei musei ferraresi, afferma come già sul finire del secolo scorso andrà formandosi da una parte
un pubblico di "cultura alta, di ceto sociale medio-alto che frequenta i grandi eventi musicali e alcune
manifestazioni o attività fortemente specializzate. È composto da un pubblico locale residente nella città
e da un altro proveniente da fuori Ferrara" (*Ivi*: 260); dall'altra, "un secondo tipo di pubblico, certamente
molto più vasto del primo, è il pubblico colto e nomade delle mostre, espressione di un turismo culturale
ormai globale, che rappresenta l'"utenza di massa' qualificata cui l'offerta culturale della città si indirizza
[…] il cui elevato capitale culturale non comporta necessariamente un elevato capitale economico" (*Ivi*:
261). A questo si aggiungerà un terzo pubblico: "un'ulteriore quota è rappresentata dal pubblico dei
'mondi culturali' (*urban cultural worlds*) della città, quello cioè che frequenta conferenze, dibattiti, spettacoli
(musicali, teatrali, ecc.)". Tre pubblici che avranno dunque sempre meno a che fare con quella
cittadinanza coinvolta nelle iniziative culturali dei decenni precedenti se si pensa che "del milione circa
di visitatori di sette grandi mostre fra il 1991 e il 1995, meno del 10% era un pubblico locale" (*Ibidem*).

Quello che sicuramente verrà a terminare, in questo processo, è quel grado di innovazione,
sperimentazione, apertura interdisciplinare che aveva caratterizzato i 'non eventi' degli anni Cinquanta-
Ottanta, soprattutto da quando il Comune sceglierà di svolgere sia il ruolo di regolatore e conservatore
della nascente 'città d'arte', sia quello di impresario della nuova 'città della cultura' (*Ibidem*).

Obiettivo generale di questo articolo è quello di riprendere alcune riflessioni prodotte da una ricerca
che ho iniziato nel 2018 su Ferrara al fine di comprendere e spiegare come tale cambiamento abbia
cancellato, anche nel ricordo di molti cittadini, un modo di 'fare cultura' – e di intendere la cultura –
che caratterizzava l'attività dell'"operatore culturale' per come era stata teorizzata da una rete di
intellettuali attivi in città tra gli anni Cinquanta e gli anni Ottanta (Sitti 1976). Per farlo mi concentrerò
sul perché la parola 'ibrido' sia stata determinante per questa stagione culturale terminata con la nascita
del *brand* 'Ferrara città dell'arte' e focalizzerò la mia analisi soprattutto su un contesto geografico fuori
le Mura cittadine, ovvero il Delta[5].

Come scrivono Farnetti e Rimondi nella loro 'geografia letteraria padana' il paesaggio del Delta per
diversi decenni del Novecento ha influenzato la produzione di scritture, pitture, ricerche, inchieste,
fotografie e video di difficile classificazione 'disciplinare'.

---

[4] Per pensare ai grandi eventi basta riflettere sulla ricaduta che hanno avuto in città le grandi mostre, i grandi concerti e gli
allestimenti di opere prodotti dal Teatro comunale sotto la direzione di Claudio Abbado a cominciare dal 1989, quando si
insedia a Ferrara la *Chamber Orchestra of Europe*.

[5] Alla base di questa scelta vi è la convinzione che per ricostruire il sapere urbano di Ferrara occorre spostarsi fuori dal tessuto
comunale racchiuso dentro le Mura. Durante la ricerca ho man mano preso consapevolezza, in effetti, di come l'attività artistica
e di ricerca condotta sul Delta tra gli anni Cinquanta e Ottanta abbia avuto forti ripercussioni anche per il capoluogo estense.

Il tema del Po è dilatabile a svariati a livelli e a diverse discipline soprattutto negli anni '50 e '60. Altrettanto limpidi sono i rapporti che le ricerche e le testimonianze raccolte quasi naturalmente istituiscono tra linguaggi separati o estranei tra loro […]. Questa pluralità sembra piuttosto trarre origine da una consapevolezza comune di complessità e difficoltà nell'interrogare l'essenza del soggetto indagato. […] Abbiamo avuto autori che hanno scritto soggetti per il cinema e romanzi, che hanno spaziato nella pittura e nella letteratura dentro un ambito culturale che ha custodito risorse di una notevole vitalità, capaci ancora oggi di qualche eco. (IBC 1995: 7-13)

Quello che farò è dimostrare perché tanti artisti, studiosi, intellettuali, in anni di particolare entusiasmo e di impegno politico e sociale, abbiano voluto contaminare linguaggi e sguardi disciplinari storicamente differenti concentrando lo sguardo su questo territorio della provincia ferrarese. Nei prossimi paragrafi prenderò sotto esame l'opera di alcuni artisti visivi, nello specifico registi e documentaristi autori di prodotti culturali di valore antropologico.

2. L'Ufficio Studi della Camera del Lavoro di Ferrara

Spero Ghedini me lo ricordo, perché abitavamo a pochi metri, quattro/cinque porte accanto alla mia. Anche lui era un uomo del fare. (Bonora, artista ferrarese, settembre 2018)

Tassinari (2017) ricorda gli anni Sessanta come un periodo di forte entusiasmo per quanto concerne Ferrara e la sua produzione culturale. Il grande fermento di quel periodo, per la studiosa, si spiega anche facendo ricorso a categorie spaziali. Sono gli anni, infatti, in cui il nuovo direttore del Palazzo Diamanti, Renato Farina, decide di trasformare "l'eccellenza architettonica del Palazzo dei Diamanti" in una "costellazione di spazi polivalenti, veramente 'democratici' perché aperti a ogni tipo d'indagine, senza imbarazzi o preclusioni" (Tassinari 2017: 34). Quello che avrebbe potuto essere una 'cattedrale' distaccata dal tessuto urbano divenne con il tempo, in una città sempre dallo sguardo rivolto al passato, il "ganglio simbolico di un sistema di relazioni aggrappanti, in sintonia diretta con la contemporaneità" (*Ibidem):*

La Sala Polivalente di Palazzo Massari, la Benvenuto Tisi, il Padiglione Arte Contemporanea, il Centro Video Arte: 'La flotta intorno alla sua ammiraglia' […] era composta da equipaggi che veleggiavano in acque differenti, ma con l'unico obiettivo di far incrociare le rotte di naviganti ed esploratori sul magico Quadrivio degli Angeli [il nome assegnato all'incrocio di Corso Ercole I d'Este con l'asse Corso Porta-Mare-Corso Biagio Rossetti]. […] Si promuoveva, così, quasi un *happening* spontaneo, sguardi moderni sugli incroci rinascimentali, un rito collettivo che si ripeteva a ogni tornata di mostre spingendo il pubblico a mirare da una parte all'altra […]. Forse solo cogliendo il valore di questa prospettiva policentrica che si può davvero cercare di comprendere la formula della *golden age* ferrarese, sospesa tra sogno e pragmatismo, sperimentazione e tradizione, ribellione e mondanità, aperture all'avanguardia e revisioni della storia. (*Ivi:* 34-35)

Una 'costellazione' di spazi pubblici per nulla autoreferenziali, che a loro volta ne generavano altri, se pensiamo, come ricorda l'artista Lola Bonora, direttrice fino agli anni Novanta del Centro Video Arte, come da questi luoghi artisti e spettatori si muovessero poi per la città continuando a dibattere di arte e di cultura:

La video arte è stata importante e io ho voluto farla arrivare a Ferrara. Io lavoravo a una sala che si chiamava Polivalente dove ci vedevamo ed era sempre piena: la prima serata c'era un artista e c'erano sette persone e questo artista che aveva fatto una performance bellissima ha detto "E adesso vi porto tutti a cena", e siamo andati tutti dal ristorante Settimo a mangiare assieme. Allora io ho pensato che la Polivalente deve funzionare in modo tale che il pubblico sia protagonista. Io devo coinvolgerli sempre, l'artista deve saperlo. Questo non era scontato e ha funzionato tantissimo. (Bonora, intervista marzo 2019)

Una costellazione di spazi culturali, distribuiti in uno spazio molto circoscritto, che generò un circolo virtuoso se pensiamo a come, a inizio anni Duemila, l'Amministrazione, giocando sulla sua immagine

di città della cultura, utilizzerà siti e luoghi d'arte dentro le Mura per ospitare festival come quello della rivista *Internazionale* o far sfilare gli artisti di strada, come nel caso del Festival dei *buskers*.

> Non era per nulla scontato a Ferrara fare un festival degli artisti di strada, di coloro che parte della popolazione vedeva ancora come 'accattoni'. Queste cose avvengono negli anni Duemila perché c'era stato un grande fermento culturale nei decenni precedenti... se oggi c'è il Festival della rivista Internazionale è perché c'erano ancora i frutti da raccogliere di quel fermento. (Gessi, direttore del quotidiano on line "FerraraItalia", luglio 2019)

Nel 2016 lo storico Hirsch pubblica *Le temps des sociétés*. Il collega Topalov in *Des sciences sociales dans le temps*, saggio pubblicato dalla rivista *Genèses* nel 2019, ne riprende alcuni passaggi scrivendo come chiunque voglia realizzare una "histoire sociale des idées", potrà trovare utile leggere il libro di Hirsch (Topalov 2019: 160). Un testo che si muove tra sociologia, psicologia, etnografia, storia dimostrando come, se vogliamo studiare le ricadute sociali di una idea, di una stagione culturale, non possiamo concentrarsi solo sui contenuti di queste idee, ma dobbiamo analizzare come tali ricadute dipendano anche da "l'audience qu'il a pu obtenir et des lectures qui ont en été faites" (*Ivi*: 163). I paletti disciplinari che separano per esempio la psicologia collettiva da altri saperi legati alle scienze sociali crollano, per Topalov, nel momento in cui vogliamo studiare "les mentalités" – les facons de sentir et de penser des hommes dans leur diversité historique et sociale":

> La notion de "mentalité", en se dégageant du concept durkheimien de "représentations collectives", était rendue disponible pour circuler entre psychologie, ethnologie et histoire. (*Ivi*: 165)

Nel suo studio Thomas Hirsch evidenzia l'esistenza di un *sens commun* diffuso tra filosofi, sociologi, psicologi, storici, etnologi che non è un "paradigme" o un "épistémè", e che lo storico preferisce chiamare "constellation [...] – interaction de penseurs et espace de pensée produisant des objets complexes partagés" (Hirsch 2016: 391-396). Tale costellazione, per lo studioso, è frutto di "une forte homogéneité sociale et politique" (*Ivi*: 396) all'interno di gruppi di intellettuali che vivono in un circoscritto periodo storico ma anche di "certaines conditions 'morphologiques': un espace géographique restreint [...], l'interconnaissance dès les années de formation, des institutions communes favorisant des pratiques intenses de discussion" (*Ibidem*).

L'oggetto di ricerca di Hirsch è il Quartiere Latino di Parigi, uno spazio urbano limitato dove un gruppo d'intellettuali per diverso tempo si sono formati e hanno scritto sulle stesse riviste: "l'*Année sociologique* [...], l'*Année psychologique* [...], la *Revue philosophique* [...], sans parler des réunions de la Societé de Philosophie. Revues et sociétés savantes – et, dans l'entre-deux-guerres, instituts de recerche – étaient les formes principales d'expression".

> Peut-etre conviendrait-il de poursuivre cette superbe enquête sur les pubblications et correspondances par une étude morphologique de ce "petit monde", concue comme telle. Elle associerait les réseaux de textes aux réseaux d'acteurs et les uns et les autres aux institutions qui constituaient le cadre et les formes principales d'organisation de débats. Après cette étude quasiment exhaustive à partir de l'analyseur "temps social", un tableau complet est à portée de main, prenant en compte les générations, les formations initiales, les lieux d'enseignement, les carrières et les réseaux d'appui, les revues et lieux de pubblication, les sociétés savantes. (*Ivi*: 168)

Quando, per la mia ricerca, ho iniziato a lavorare utilizzando categorie spaziali per poi incrociarle con la biografia intellettuale di alcuni protagonisti di questa stagione culturale, ero consapevole della differenza tra una città come Ferrara e il Quartiere Latino di Parigi. La spazialità della produzione culturale ferrarese tra gli anni Cinquanta e gli anni Ottanta potrebbe però, se approfondita come chiave di lettura, aiutare a comprendere meglio come ha avuto avvio, in un periodo così circoscritto di tempo, questa stagione di entusiasmo dopo i disastrosi anni della Guerra.

Di questa costellazione facevano sicuramente parte quegli spazi dove i cittadini potevano vedere e dibattere film. Opere cinematografiche che non si limitavano a 'classici' del grande schermo, ma anche all'attività di ricerca che l'Ufficio Studi della Camera del Lavoro, coordinata per diversi anni da Spero Ghedini, iniziò sul Delta.

Il progetto nasce alla Camera del Lavoro e per merito di persone come il segretario della Camera del Lavoro di Ferrara di quell'epoca, Spero Ghedini, che avevo già conosciuto nel periodo della clandestinità sotto il nome di Antonio. [...] Spero Ghedini [...] crea, un ufficio stampa e propaganda (che non credo esistesse in altre camere del lavoro) che affida a Onorio Dolcetti, un giornalista ferrarese. E su questo innesta non solo la produzione di cinema, ma anche un'operazione culturale, per esempio nei confronti dei pittori ferraresi, di stimolo e di attenzione verso le realtà umane, sociali e ambientali. Mobilita giovani di talento (Carlo Rambaldi, Sandro Simeoni, Ervardo Fioravanti e altri) nella creazione di manifesti, mostre, allestimenti vari. [...] Ricordo lunghe riunioni e discussioni nell'Ufficio stampa della Camera del Lavoro [...]. Eravamo un gruppo molto unito di cui facevano parte anche Fabio Pitorru, che fu il mio aiuto regista, e Benedetto Ghiglia, che già in fase di sceneggiatura cominciò a elaborare un commento musicale molto particolare. (Florestano Vancini, regista di *Delta padano*, 1951, intervistato dalla storica ferrarese Quarzi, 2002: 91-92)

Nel 1952 un notiziario della Cgil dà conto della presenza presso la Camera del Lavoro di Ferrara di un gruppo di giovani i quali, a volte nelle vesti di membri dell'Ufficio Studi, altre in quelle di Centro Stampa, svolgono e promuovono attività culturali legate alla comunicazione. Il nome di Spero Ghedini compare, già in quell'occasione, come quello del coordinatore e si cita il giornale *La nuova scintilla* come contesto da dove provengono la maggior parte di questi 'giovani' (Atti, segretario generale della Camera Territoriale del Lavoro di Ferrara, in Boursier 1999: 14-16):

Colpisce la consapevolezza dell'importanza della comunicazione, forse anche come riflesso dell'esperienza di gruppi dirigenti impegnati nella Resistenza e che ebbero modo di riflettere sul ruolo avuto dal cinema e dalla radio nella costruzione del consenso al regime. [...] Nel giro di pochi anni la Camera del Lavoro produce direttamente tre documentari. In quegli stessi anni si promuovono anche due mostre e concorsi di pittura che vedranno la partecipazione di artisti di rilievo. (*Ibidem*)

Siamo negli anni, come ricorda Giuseppe Caleffi, segretario nazionale della Federbraccianti dal 1958 al 1969 e poi dal 1970 al 1978 della Camera del Lavoro dell'Emilia-Romagna, del *Piano di lavoro* lanciato da Di Vittorio, quando sarà proprio il Sindacato a promuovere studi e ricerche sulle condizioni dei lavoratori (Quarzi, in Boursier 1999: 117-120)

C'erano i cinema in provincia. Si portavano anche i film sul Delta, ma bisognerebbe verificare. Film di ferraresi che uscivano dalle Mura, che mostravano la provincia e poi tornavano dentro le Mura. [...] La parte cinematografica ha giocato un ruolo importante. Prima ci furono i documentari, se pensiamo a Vancini e al gruppo di intellettuali de "La voce del Delta" [libro-manifesto di questo gruppo di intellettuali ferrarese del 1953, n.d.a.]. Il cinema era importante perché la televisione non c'era, e la tv si vedeva nella Casa del Popolo o in quelle pochissime case che ce l'avevano. (Cazzola, intervista giugno 2018)

Il caso più esemplificativo, in questa direzione, è il film di Visconti *Ossessione*. Girato nell'estate del '42, venne proiettato a Ferrara per la prima volta nel '43, poco prima del crollo del Fascismo. Il critico Gambetti ricorda come il film non ebbe successo in città:

Ci furono proteste in sala che a ogni passaggio si ripetevano. Credo sia rimasto in proiezione un paio di giorni, non tanto di più. In "Ossessione" c'è un particolare che sconvolse i ferraresi (un montaggio che nel cinema è frequente, intendiamoci…): in un'inquadratura con lo sfondo della stazione ferroviaria, Girotti [il protagonista del film, n.d.a.] salta su un camion da dietro come se il camion fosse lì, e nel controcampo il camion si allontana su uno sfondo completamente diverso. Lo spettatore ferrarese sa che di fronte a quell'edificio che lui riconosce bene come la stazione ferroviaria c'è un piazzale… e non quell'altro edificio che si vede subito dopo. Insomma, a Ferrara dopo un po' si rafforza la voce che già circolava durante le riprese che c'erano le prove che "gli italiani – per lo meno quelli lì – non sanno fare il cinema". Nel pubblico c'era il mito del divismo americano. (Gambetti 2018: 27-28)

Eppure sarà proprio *Ossessione* a segnare la carriera di quella che lo storico del cinema Micalizzi chiamerà 'la scuola ferrarese':

> Allora – scrive Vancini – era un ragazzino, avevo sì e no 16 anni, ed avevo già questa passione per il cinema. Quando vidi il film ebbi una delle emozioni più grandi della mia vita di spettatore. Il film si rivelò per me e per quelli della mia generazione un grande momento di maturazione culturale e politica. (Micalizzi 2018: 3)

Negli anni '50 a Ferrara si potevano contare in città due cineforum che richiamavano in sala tantissime persone – e un terzo legato all'Università di Ferrara. A proposito di costellazioni, tali realtà legavano la loro attività a quella di altre strutture attive in città, quali il Centro Studi dei cattolici oppure il Circolo del Cinema.

> A Santo Spirito c'era il cineforum dei cattolici al loro Centro Studi; poi c'era il Circolo del Cinema dei comunisti con il loro Cineforum dell'Apollino […] e poi c'era il cineforum dell'Università. Io sono arrivato a Ferrara nel '58 e non ho seguito tutta quella attività che nasce ancora prima su cui nessuno ha mai scritto. (Micalizzi, intervista settembre 2019)

Questi cineforum facevano a loro volta capo a centri culturali al cui interno si formò una scuola di documentaristi che lavorò per portare sullo schermo storie frutto di ricerche condotte sul territorio del Delta a partire dagli anni Cinquanta.

> A Ferrara il circolo di cultura Cinematografica dell'AFU-4S ("Siamo Studenti Senza Soldi") si nutriva principalmente delle proiezioni di vecchi film italiani e internazionali alla domenica mattina in qualche sala cinematografica di periferia – agli inizi – e poi stabilmente al cinema Apollino per concessione del proprietario Antonio Azzali. Fui così che in poco tempo noi giovani appassionati sia delle opere mai viste (a causa della censura fascista) della storia del cinema, sia della disponibilità di scoprire le tecniche realizzative (il carrello, i diversi piani di ripresa, la dissolvenza, il montaggio, l'incidenza della musica, ecc.), cercavamo di andare alla scoperta del cinema stesso, di conoscerne i numerosi risvolti dibattendone i più spinosi problemi nei contenuti e nelle tecniche. […] Va però precisato che, accanto al Circolo di Cultura Cinematografica AFU, nel 1953 venne fondato il Cineclub Ferrara, il giorno 24 settembre. Scopo di questo nuovo sodalizio cinematografico era quello di andare oltre la conoscenza del cinema, attraverso le opere, per arrivare a realizzare dei film. (Massimo Sani, in Micalizzi 2019: 12-14)

3. *Delta Padano* e i documentaristi del Po

> Esplode il paesaggio italiano con una vigoria e una drammaticità nuove […]. I confini ancora ristretti entro i quali si era esercitato il gusto pittorico e paesaggistico dei migliori fra i formalisti, vengono spezzati e valicati con coraggio per un'esplorazione avventurosa e ardita. Le strade e le pianure assolate dell'Emilia, il corso maestoso del Po, e i suoi argini prolungati verso orizzonti interminabili, le vie contorte e le piazzette delle città di provincia, affollate di mercanti e di biciclette, la fiera all'aperto […], sono elementi che danno al film prospettiva e respiro inconsueti. A questi esterni, il film alternava ambienti altrettanto nuovi: osterie, alberghetti di terz'ordine dalle camere squallide, terze classi dai sedili di legno, uffici di polizia dalle pareti spoglie e bianche e dalla mobilia triste. (Lizzani su *Ossessione*, 1992, in IBC 2008: 54)

In un giorno caldo e luminoso di metà ottobre 2019 l'assessore alla Cultura di Ferrara e lo storico del cinema Paolo Micalizzi, presso il cinema Boldini, intitolarono una targa ai documentaristi ferraresi Ezio Pecora, Renzo Ragazzi e Massimo Sani. Sarà lo stesso storico, dopo la proiezione di alcuni loro lavori, a parlare dell'esistenza di una 'scuola ferrarese':

> Io sono la memoria storica, perché sono tutti morti. "Delta Padano" [il lavoro del regista Florestano Vancini del 1951, n.d.a.] fu il capostipite di questo cinema che riguarda il Delta. Io ho cominciato a interessarmi a queste cose leggendo giornali. C'era chi mi diceva, anche un assessore, che faceva: "Ma sei tu che ti sei inventato Ferrara città del cinema!". Allora io feci una mostra dimostrando con le copertine dei film che Ferrara era veramente una città del cinema, e così ho iniziato a scrivere cine-guide e scritto sui singoli autori. (Micalizzi, intervista settembre 2019)

Oggi quasi tutti i registi, documentaristi, artisti visivi coetanei di Florestano Vancini sono morti. Paolo Micalizzi, con i suoi scritti, ha ricostruito le loro storie e catalogato le loro opere mostrando l'esistenza di un cinema legato al territorio ferrarese decisamente innovativo rispetto a quello *mainstream*:

> Tutti andarono a Roma, ma conservarono rapporti con Ferrara. Molti moriranno anche a Roma, ma faranno i funerali a Ferrara. Simbolica la morte di Ezio Pecora che morì in un viaggio in macchina tra Ferrara e Roma. […] Felisatti, Pitorru, Sani, Ragazzi andranno tutti via. Io avevo un buon rapporto con Renzo Ragazzi e così ho ricostruito tutto invitando loro a Ferrara; del resto, non esisteva un archivio del cinema ferrarese. (Micalizzi, intervista ottobre 2019)

Visconti decise di girare tra Ferrara e la provincia *Ossessione* (1943) e il suo film cambierà non solo il modo di raccontare il Delta, ma, più in generale, il modo di osservare quel tipo di realtà. Il critico Gianni Rondolino nel 1971 affermerà come con *Ossessione* nasce il neorealismo italiano: "La bassa pianura ferrarese, Ferrara stessa e gli altri luoghi in cui si svolgeva la storia di *Ossessione* non erano uno scenario casuale e folkloristico, bensì parte integrante" (Rondolino 1971, in Micalizzi 1990: 59). Il caso Visconti-Delta non rimase isolato. Michelangelo Antonioni, il quale lavorò come aiuto-regista durante le riprese di *Ossessione*, nello stesso anno iniziò a girare un documentario proprio sulle terre deltizie. Un lavoro che dovette lasciare per l'inizio della Guerra, ma che ultimò nel '47 con il titolo *Gente del Po*. (IBC 1995: 15). Nell'articolo *Per un film sul fiume Po*, del 1939, il regista ferrarese scrisse del Delta come di un microcosmo chiuso e completo, interessante da raccontare non secondo la chiave folkloristica utilizzata fino ad allora, ma attraverso la storia e le pratiche di vita quotidiane dei suoi abitanti.

> Visconti diceva che voleva rappresentare una società italiana rimasta intaccabile, e niente di meglio era il sottoproletariato del Delta. Per Delta si intende il Polesine, sia la parte ferrarese che rodigina. Tenendo presente che nel '46 Rossellini gira qui l'ultimo episodio di "Paisà". Prima nel '42 era apparso il documentario di Fernando Cerchio, ovvero "Comacchio", che raccontava la vita dei pescatori, dei bambini d Comacchio, un affresco neorealistico. Prima c'erano storie romanzate, piccole storie di folklore, "Ossessione" invece comincia a cogliere veramente la realtà. (Micalizzi, intervista luglio 2019)

L'alluvione del '51 spingerà molti registi, anche fuori da Ferrara, a rappresentare queste terre. Nel testo curato da Ezio Raimondi e Nazareno Pisauri e pubblicato nella metà degli anni Novanta dall'Istituto dei Beni Cultuali, le parole di Lizzani appaiono come un vero e proprio manifesto culturale:

> L'alluvione del Polesine avvenuta nel 1951 doveva essere tratta in un film dal titolo "Alluvione" che doveva essere diretto nel 1952 da Oreste Palella e Roberto Rossellini […]. Ma poi non se ne fece nulla. Chilanti e Sartarelli avevano invece scritto un soggetto sulla rotta del Po e sulle popolazioni del Delta padano intitolato "Gli uomini del fiume". Anch'esso non fu realizzato […]: "Adesso" − è scritto nelle ultime righe del soggetto − "la volontà degli uomini è più forte del fiume. Gli argini saranno ricostruiti in maniera solida e sicura, nessuno sarà più costretto a vivere sotto l'incubo permanente delle acque, finalmente saranno compiuti quei grandi lavori che guerre, sciagure e inerzia hanno sempre impedito di realizzare. […] Ma noi non vogliamo credere che simili errori possano essere ripetuti […]. Invitiamo i nostri migliori registi a visitare le terre e le genti che abitano alla foce del Po: troveranno un mondo fantastico ed inesplorato capace di suggerire motivi umani e civili per un grande film". (Micalizzi 2010: 222-223)

Le prime prove neorealiste sul Delta dopo Visconti e *Ossessione* nascono infatti proprio guardando il Delta e dentro tale manifesto politico. Nel 1950 Florestano Vancini, insieme ad Adolfo Baruffi, realizzano *Uomini della pianura*, documentario che ha per oggetto lo sforzo degli uomini per far fronte ai danni provocati dall'alluvione del Reno e descrive la vita miserevole della gente della Bassa. Lo stesso

stato di degradazione morale e materiale, ricorda sempre Micalizzi, sarà al centro di *Delta padano* (1951). Sempre nel 1951 Fabio Pitorru girerà *Comacchio piange* con protagonisti i 15.000 abitanti della città deltizia. Sei anni dopo, nel '57, Marcello di Pietro realizzerà *Segno di croce*, che documenta la situazione di analfabetismo esistente nelle varie località del Delta del Po (Micalizzi 1990: 68-72). Si tratterà, nella maggior parte dei casi, di documentari frutto di inchieste, come quella di Renato Dall'Ara e Renzo Ragazzi su un villaggio di pescatori del Delta del Po nella zona di Punta Maistra dal titolo *Scano Boa* (1954).

In questa direzione è legittimo affermare che la Camera del Lavoro e l'Ufficio Studi coordinato da giocarono un ruolo simile a quello che ebbe la famosa agenzia del New Deal "Farm Security Administration" creata negli Stati Uniti nel 1937 per combattere la povertà rurale durante la Grande Depressione degli Stati Uniti. L'opera visiva di Vancini *Delta Padano* permise a molti di conoscere, infatti, quali fossero le reali condizioni di vita del Delta e della provincia ferrarese proprio negli anni in cui avrebbe dovuto cominciare la grande Riforma agraria e l'operazione di bonifica del territorio.

Delta Padano, inoltre, permette di comprendere il portato innovativo di questi lavori, difficilmente classificabili come documentari, cortometraggi o, più genericamente, film: "quel 'documentarismo sociale' che è una delle componenti più interessanti del film documentario in Italia, e che quasi sempre nasce al di fuori delle tradizionali strutture produttive cinematografiche[6]" (Giannarelli, in Boursier 1999: 12-13).

> "Delta Padano" – ricorda Vancini – fu girato a Gorino, una piccola razione di Goro, che in quel momento era a sua volta frazione di Mesola, e a Scardovari, una località con tre case che è in provincia di Rovigo, di là da un ramo del Po. […] Era come scoprire un mondo, eppure siamo a poco più di 50 Km da Ferrara. Quando io ritornavo a casa e raccontavo come vivevano a Comacchio, a Goro, a Gorino, mi ricordo che a tavola io padre e mia madre, e non era una famiglia di signori in guanti bianchi, restavano sbalorditi e così anche gli amici. Fu per me un'esperienza straordinaria. […] Per fare le riprese non abbiamo creato niente, abbiamo solo messo insieme la famiglia. Vivevano lì, tutti in una stanza. Si nutrivano solo di polenta e di pesce, nient'altro. Si dissetavano con l'acqua del Po. Riempivano i secchi, li portavano a casa, lasciavano depositare la melma, poi col mestolo bevevano l'acqua. E il medico raccomandava di bollirla, ma figurati. […] gli aspetti così degradati, con le case con i tetti di canne, quattro mura tirate su, non ci sono più, però la suggestione di quel paesaggio resta fortissima. (Micalizzi 2011: 32-33)

Vancini, seguendo a Comacchio i processi contro i pescatori di frodo, cominciò a studiare le condizioni di vita delle popolazioni delle Valli che sopravvivevano grazie alla pesca delle anguille: "Correvo appena potevo, in motorino, sugli argini del Po, a osservare luoghi e persone, e poi cominciai a fare dei documentari su di loro" (*Ibidem*).

> Questo perché "Delta Padano" e altri lavori di quel tipo nascono da inchieste giornaliste che lo stesso Vancini o altri facevano. Conta poi che dopo l'alluvione saranno tantissimi i giornalisti e le testate che venivano nel Delta per seguire la tragica vicenda. D'altronde non furono pochi i giornalisti che poi facevano inchiesta e magari cinema, ricerca. (Micalizzi, intervista ottobre 2019)

Nel leggere il volume curato da Boursier (1999) appaio evidenti i richiami del film al dibattito iniziato con Flaherty sul valore del documentario come opera non più inconciliabile con la messa in scena e con e le procedure tipiche della *fiction*, nonostante la volontà di ridurre allo stretto necessario la drammatizzazione degli eventi; proprio ciò, d'altronde, aveva permesso a questi lavori di essere considerate opere artistiche. *Delta Padano*, proprio seguendo una traccia narrativo-descrittiva appena abbozzata, mostrerà la straordinaria maturità registica di Vancini, frutto, probabilmente, dell'influenza di quello sguardo nuovo, neorealista, che aveva caratterizzato i lavori di Visconti. Anche il posizionamento di Vancini non doveva essere frutto del caso. Nell'osservare e descrivere uomini, donne, bambini e vecchi che ripetevano "gesti d'ogni giorno, secondo i ritmi e le scansioni di un mondo fermo,

---

[6] A dimostrazione del peso che ebbe l'opera di Vancini, lo stesso Di Vittorio assistette alla proiezione del film nell'intervallo di un convegno sindacale sulla montante lotta bracciantile. Come ricorda Onorio Dolcetti, "finita la proiezione ci fu un applauso al quale Di Vittorio si unì; quindi, rivolto Spero Ghedini, segretario della Camera del Lavoro di Ferrara, gli disse: 'Fatelo girare ovunque potete e per quanto vi è possibile' " (Dolcetti, in Boursier 1999: 9).

stagnante, visitato dalle epidemie, dal sole implacabile d'estate e dal freddo e dal vento gelido d'inverno, dalla esiguità delle sostanze per sbarcare il lunario" (Argentieri, in Boursier 1999: 18-21), il regista non assumerà mai un atteggiamento 'pauperista', "né si abbandonerà all'impeto di una denuncia e di una protesta che sarebbero comunque legittime" (*Ibidem*); all'opposto Vancini darà l'impressione di osservare e partecipare lui stesso a quella vita, senza mai commentarla, contestualizzandola con pochi ed eloquenti dati statistici.

Sarà infatti proprio la relazione tra questi esseri umani e l'ambiente del Delta al centro della maggior parte delle opere visive prodotte in questi anni: "Il paesaggio è fotografato nella sua nuda solitudine [...], chiuso dalla linea infinita dell'orizzonte, attraversato da canali: [...] interrotto da rade abitazioni e da capanne di paglia, una pianura abbandonata alla rassegnazione, ai lunghi pomeriggi di ozio imposte dalla mancanza di lavoro, all'invecchiamento precoce delle donne" (*Ibidem*). Se prendiamo in considerazione il ventennio dopo *Delta Padano*, si assisterà a una fioritura di opere visive che andranno tutte in questa direzione.

Il testo di Giovanna Boursier sulla nascita e il restauro del film *Delta Padano* ci aiuta a comprendere quanto quest'opera segnò un'epoca e volesse uscire dal campo specificatamente cinematografico per dialogare con altre discipline e sguardi di ricerca che, negli stessi anni, si domandavano quale fosse il modo migliore per raccontare un territorio come il Delta:

> Mentre scrivevamo la sceneggiatura sapevamo benissimo che una famiglia come l'avevamo immaginata se pure tipica, non l'avremmo mai trovata nella sua realtà, come poi fu. Sapevamo insomma che avremmo dovuto ricreare tutto davanti alla macchina da presa. E già nell'elaborazione della sceneggiatura facemmo la scelta di non utilizzare mai dialoghi reali tra i personaggi, anche quando li avessimo colti. E così è: nel film non li sentiamo mai parlare. Solo il medico, a un certo punto, spiega alla gente qualcosa sulla situazione igienico sanitaria, ma è chiaro che anche questa è finzione perché la voce che gli diamo non è la sua, ma quella dello speaker anonimo. E faremo subito una distinzione tra voce maschile e femminile attribuendo alla prima le informazioni di carattere generale, alla seconda le annotazioni più umane, di vita quotidiana. [...] Il documentario è girato quasi tutto a Gorino, piccolo paese sul ramo del Po di Goro, l'ultimo prima del mare, ma i personaggi sono anche una frazione del Comune di Mesola. [...] Li ho scelti come si scelgono sempre, girando osservando e confrontando le persone. Evidentemente ho scelto quelli che sembravano più adatti, magari anche perché uno mi dava più tranquillità sul fatto che non si sarebbe emozionato davanti alla macchina da presa. Non avevamo molti mezzi e non potevamo sprecare pellicola. Mi trovai poi di fronte a persone che, pur non avendo mai visto una macchina da presa e forse anche pochissimo cinema, si dimostravano abbastanza disinvolti, capendo che compivano i gesti della loro quotidianità [...]. Non ci vedevano come estranei. Parlavamo la loro lingua, il dialetto, eravamo dalla loro parte, loro lo sentivano, lo sapevano. Non avemmo mai problemi di nessun genere. Non ci sentivano estranei, ma dei ragazzi del loro mondo che partecipavano in maniera totale e passionale alle loro lotte. In quei giorni alloggiamo a Goro, nell'unica locanda che esisteva e faceva anche un po' da trattoria per i rari forestieri che capitavano nel paese. (Boursier 1999: 94)

Il 9 aprile 1999, a Ferrara, nella sala del cinema Rivoli, *Delta Padano* venne proiettato alla presenza di Florestano Vancini e alcuni di coloro che nel 1951 avevano collaborato alla realizzazione del film. Circa cinquant'anni dunque erano passati e in tutto questo periodo Vancini continuò a perseguire questo sguardo:

> Quando, dopo "Delta Padano", mi trovo davanti a un bivio e scelgo di fare del cinema la professione, lo decido, direi, con naturalezza, come un impegno profondo a raccontare la realtà culturale, politica e sociale. Scelgo il cinema per continuare le scelte che avevo già fatto a diciassette, diciotto anni; il cinema diventa il mezzo con cui potrò esprimere e vivere il mio impegno nella società, per cambiarla. L'ho sempre vista così [...]. L'impegno di noi giovani di allora sia stato parte del grande movimento culturale e politico di quegli anni. È servito perché credo che storicamente non si possa negare che tutta una cultura, dal cinema all'arte, alla narrativa, si sia fortemente impegnata per cambiare la società e raggiungere una maggiore giustizia eliminando situazioni orrende come quella del Delta. (Quarzi 2002: 94-95)

Il cinema, dagli anni Cinquanta formerà a Ferrara critici cinematografici quali Guido Fink, registi, documentaristi e artisti visivi che sceglieranno di raccontare territori come quello del Delta, e ancora compositori di musiche, sceneggiatori, direttori della fotografia e degli 'effetti speciali' che diverranno

famosi ben oltre il territorio ferrarese. Alcuni, per raccontare le loro storie, utilizzeranno le testimonianze orali raccolte dal Centro Etnografico. Altri faranno 'scuola', se pensiamo all'uso di strumenti all'epoca sperimentali, come nel caso di Folco Quilici, il quale può essere considerato uno dei maggiori esperti di film di viaggi – il tema del 'viaggio sul Po' diventerà un vero e proprio filone di rappresentazione e di studio di un territorio, come emergerà per esempio nei lavori di Gianfranco Mingozzi, uno tra i migliori documentaristi italiani (Quarzi 2005). Saranno d'altronde proprio queste opere a stimolare molti altri intellettuali, come Massimo Sani, a metà dei Settanta, a sviluppare il linguaggio dell'inchiesta, come quella dal titolo *Nelle terre del Delta: uomini e Po* (1975):

> C'è la volontà di raccontare le cose in modo diverso. Folco Quilici diceva per esempio che tutta la linea orizzontale del Delta e della Padania ha cambiato il cinema. Massimo Sani voleva trovare un modo per raccontare nel cinema le storie delle lotte sociali, come Ezio Pecora e Pitorru, ma anche i "Mustri" di Ragazzi. Anche le inchieste di Zavoli nascono in questo clima, che però ha alla base il Neorealismo. (Micalizzi, intervista settembre 2019)

Alcune tra queste sperimentazioni visive contribuiranno a rendere nobile un linguaggio come quello dello sceneggiato, come nel caso dei lavori tratti da *Il mulino del Po* di Sandro Bolchi del 1963 e del 1971. Altre ancora daranno forza al genere 'cinegiornale', a partire dai lavori pioneristici di Antonio Sturla (Micalizzi 2008). Il genere documentario sarà sicuramente quello che ne trarrà più vantaggio, grazie anche a lavori di non ferraresi, come nel caso di Gillo Pintecorvo, il quale nel 1951 realizzerà *La missione Timiriazév*, la storia di una nave sovietica giunta a Genova carica di regali per i bambini del Polesine colpiti dalla tragedia dell'alluvione.

Conclusioni

La fine della grande Riforma al termine degli anni Sessanta, l'avvio di processi di speculazione edilizia con la costruzione dei lidi e del primo turismo balneare, le scelte dell'amministrazione comunale di non investire più su queste ricerche e rappresentazioni visive per favorire la nascita di 'grandi eventi' ripensando la figura stessa dell''operatore di cultura', causeranno la fine di questo periodo sperimentale e, di conseguenza, l'esaurirsi della fascinazione verso il Delta.

> Allora c'era un legame politico, se pensiamo a Pecora, Ragazzi, Vancini… a loro interessava il discorso sociale, denunciare la miseria di quei luoghi, anche per formazione intellettuale, alle volte giornalistica. Oggi le cose sono diverse, la passione è solo la passione per il cinema, c'è un altro spirito con cui si va vero il Delta, che è più usata come una *location* per fare cinema, per raccontare storie. […] Prima uscivano tantissimi film, poi cominciano ad essere sempre meno. Oggi per esempio non c'è nemmeno quell'attività legata al cineclub, ai circoli del cinema e dell'università. […] C'era un ufficio cinema del Comune… siamo negli anni Ottanta […]. Oggi è rimasta solo la biblioteca al cinema Boldini […]. La stessa cosa vale per il Delta, dove nacque il centro di documentazione di Comacchio, ma che non mi pare sia attivo. (Micalizzi, intervista ottobre 2019)

> La storia in un certo si chiude. Sono gli anni in cui il Delta si è già svuotato dalla massa dei braccianti una volta finita la Riforma. Molti andarono a Milano, o a Torino, o a Genova e inoltre stava cominciando anche la nascita dell'economia balneare, che nacque selvaggiamente all'inizio. Il discorso del Delta finisce, ma occorrerebbe che continuassero gli studi e il dibattito per capire il perché di quel fermento culturale. (Cazzola, storico ferrarese, intervista giugno 2019)

Quello che sicuramente verrà a terminare, in virtù di questi processi, è quel livello di apertura interdisciplinare che aveva caratterizzato un trentennio di autentico fermento culturale che non è mai stato raccontato. Obiettivo generale di questo articolo è quello di comprendere – nella volontà di accendere un dibattito in una città, Ferrara, che non ha mai valorizzato la sua "modernità" novecentesca (Fiorillo 2017) – come la città dell'arte e della cultura degli anni Duemila sia sorta sulle ceneri di un modo di "fare cultura" – e di intendere la cultura – che caratterizzava l'attività di una rete di intellettuali operativi in città tra gli anni Cinquanta e gli anni Ottanta le cui storie e pratiche di vita quotidiana andrebbero se non altro ricordate. Ferrara ha visto nascere la facoltà di Lettere in anni molto recenti rispetto ad altre città universitarie del nostro Paese: la prima cattedra di Antropologia Culturale nascerà nel 2008 e, sicuramente, è figlia di quel fermento (Roda 2017).

BIBLIOGRAFIA

BOURSIER, Giovanna (a cura di)
1999   *Delta Padano. Storia di un film e del suo restauro.* Roma: Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico.

FIORILLO, Ada Patrizia (a cura di)
2017   *Arte contemporanea a Ferrara.* Ferrara: Mimesis.

GAMBETTI, Giacomo
2018   *Florestano Vancini.* Roma: Gremese Editore.

HIRSCH, Thomas
2016   *Le temps des sociétés.* Paris: Ed. de l'EHESS.

IBC
1995   *Il Po del '900.* Bologna: Grafis Edizioni.
2008   *Indagini sul Po.* Bologna: Clueb.

MICALIZZI, Paolo
1990   Il cinema nel Delta del Po. In *L'ambiente come soggetto: il paesaggio quotidiano*. G. Franceschini e R. Roda (a cura di). Ferrara: Spazio libri. Pp. 54-82.
2008   *Antonio Sturla: il pionere del cinema ferrarese.* Ferrara: Este Edition.
2010   *Là dove scende il fiume. Il Po e il cinema.* Firenze: Aska.
2011   *Florestano Vancini documentarista alla ricerca della realtà italiana.* Ferrara: Comune di Ferrara.
2018   *La Ferrara di Florestano Vancini.* Ferrara: Comune di Ferrara.
2019   *Massimo Sani: la storia in televisione.* Ferrara: Este Edition.

QUARZI, Anna (a cura di)
2002   *Cinquantesimo della riforma agraria in provincia di Ferrara 1951/2001. Atti del Convegno.* Ferrara: Cartografica.

QUARZI, Anna
2005   Le ali del Delta, di Folco e Brando Quilici. In *Riforma agraria: da braccianti a coltivatori diretti. Atti del convegno.* F. Cazzola (a cura di). Ferrara: Cartografica.

RODA, Roberto
2017   Gli anni dell'entusiasmo: arte, cultura e costume a Ferrara (1962-1978). In *Arte contemporanea a Ferrara.* A.P. Fiorillo (a cura di). Ferrara: Mimesis. Pp. 47-75.

SCANDURRA, Giuseppe
2018   *Ibridi ferraresi. L'antropologia in una città senza antropologi*. Roma: Meltemi.

SITTI, Renato
1976   *L'operatore di cultura.* Roma: Coines.

TASSINARI, Valeria
2017   1963-1993 Gli anni d'oro. Le grandi mostre e la costellazione dei Diamanti. In *Arte contemporanea a Ferrara.* A.P. Fiorillo (a cura di). Ferrara: Mimesis. Pp. 31-46.

TOPALOV, Christian
2019   Des sciences sociales dans le temps. *Genèses*: 160-169.

TRASFORINI, Maria Antonietta,
2001   La città d'arte come oggetto culturale. Ferrara: uno studio di cultura urbana. *Polis* 15/2: 249-268.

Border/Less

Yu Chiang Loh, *Southern University College, Malaysia*
Yoke Ling Loh, Southern *University College, Malaysia*

ABSTRACT
The Border/less photo essay is a collective work that scrutinises the daily routine of the marginalised foreign workforce in Malaysia. It investigates the foreign workers from various neighbouring countries who seek to greener pastures. From domestic helpers to construction site workers, these workers form the third-largest community in Malaysia. People are people, they are just ordinary folks that work diligently in laboured work, fuelled by dreams of a better life back home in their countries. However, the plight of life never leaves them, they are not only had to endure the life without their loved ones, but also seem so out of place in the eyes of the locals. The term "foreign worker" always connotes to negative and derogatory sense. Through the interactions with these "best known strangers", we hope to ease the invisible border between "us" and "them" and if possible, breakdown the stereotype that deeply rooted in our mind.

KEYWORDS
Visual narrative, Foreign Workforce, Marginalised Group, Border, Stereotype

BIO
Yu Chiang Loh is an assistant professor at the Department of Journalism and Communication Studies at Southern University College, Malaysia. He is also the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Director of Southern New Media Centre respectively. He obtained his Master degree in Visual Culture at Coventry University in 2006. His research focuses on visual representation of the marginalised group and community visual image representation. Meanwhile, he is also the editor-in-chief of the University Bulletin Southern Today and the advisor of the student's magazine Just a Bit.
Yoke Ling Loh is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism and Communication, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Southern University College. Her area of research includes studies on broadcasting and production, visual literacy, and documentary films.

ycloh@sc.edu.my
ylloh@sc.edu.my

Prologue
(The Story about Foreign Labour in Johor Bahru, Malaysia)

No one can tell how many foreign workers (registered and unregistered) we actually have in Malaysia. From domestic helpers to construction site workers, whether you like it or not, Malaysia's economic sectors are excessively dependent on foreign workers. Together, they have formed the third-largest community in this country.

Who would like to leave the comforts of home behind if it is not lack of opportunity in their home country that forces them to leave for greener pastures? These people are just ordinary folks like you and I, they work diligently and efficiently in laboured work, fuelled by dreams of a better life back home in their countries respectively.

However, the plight of life never leaves them alone. They are not only had to endure the life without their loved ones, but also seem so out of place in the eyes of the locals. The term "foreign worker" always connotes to negative and derogatory sense.

This documentary photo essay examines the daily routine of our best known strangers—foreign labours. Through the collective works from the lecturer and the undergraduates of Southern University College, they scrutinise these marginalised workforce under the norm of Malaysia society. Through lenses, they would like to find out the story behind of these people, as well as break down the stereotype which always portrait the negative image of foreign labours.

The project hopes to bring out these less visible people to the mainstream society simultaneously to display their joy and sorrow. This project aims at providing another way of seeing and intriguing more discussion and interaction between the foreign labours and the local.

Longing for Home

38-year-old Yasin came to Malaysia from Bangladesh eleven (11) years ago. For him, the search for better prospects in a faraway land ties in to his duty as a father of two and a husband. As a machine operator and the sole source of income for his family, Yasin is well aware that his efforts in the now have far greater implications for the future of his loved ones.

Meanwhile, Ahsan has also worked abroad for 11 years. At the time of his leaving, his daughter was in kindergarten, learning to write the word 'papa'. In the blink of an eye, 11 years has passed – Ahsan's daughter is now a graceful young woman, but rarely gets the chance to actually say 'papa' to him. Yet Ahsan remains committed to his mantle as a role model. 11 years ago, all he could speak was Bengali – 11 years later, he speaks fluent Bahasa Malaysia as well as a slew of other languages, picked up from his fellow workers. Ahsan has become somewhat like a 'big brother' to many, often offering unwavering support and assistance to fellow migrant workers. He knows how it feels like to be alone in an unfamiliar land – and as such, his kindness and openness to those in need has earned him many new kinsmen and close friends.

At home, we rely on family; Out in the world, we rely on friends. The same applies to migrant workers in Malaysia – having come so far to find better work, opportunities to socialise are few and far in between. More often than not, co-workers become confidants. Such is the case for Jeen and Ah Heng, who have since become as close as sisters. A devout Muslim, Ah Heng came to Malaysia to find avenues to provide for her family back home, while Jeen, a devoted Catholic, found companionship after leaving her homeland, and continues to strike a new path for a brighter future together in Malaysia with her partner.

Often times, their lives and stories are not so different from ours – many of the choices that they make are done so in the name of hope. Hope for a better life for themselves, and better lives for their loved ones back home.

PHOTO 1: Geracda (Aka Jean, middle) and Ihen Hendrawati (right hand side) become close friends after working in the same workplace, the Indonesian language they spoken tighten their relationship

PHOTO 2: Sometimes, preparing a meal can be improvised too. It would be easier for Ihen to prepare such an abundant of ingredients and spices on floor rather than on the table

Photo 3: During their leisure time, Jeen and IHen always like to cook some hometown flavours in the kitchen

Photo 4: A sumptuous meal is the best way to ease themselves from missing home

PHOTO 5: A sense of missing home and a sorrow facial expression reflected on the face of Jean when telling her own story

PHOTO 6: To have a friend to share the joy and sorrow, life seems easier too

PHOTO 7: Two of the foreign workers friends of Ahsan in Redwood company, chitchatting during the break

PHOTO 8: Ahsan Habib (45 years old), who works abroad for 11 years, missed the chance to accompany his growing-up daughter. He rarely goes back in order to save more money and send back home

PHOTO 9: A passport size photo reminds Ahsan, there's someone who still waiting for them to go back

PHOTO 10: 38-year-old Joynal Abedin Yasin is a machine operator and the sole source of income for his family

What Makes a Home?

It's not pleasure that brings them here – rather, it's necessity that forces them to leave the comforts of home behind to embark upon a new chapter of life. Yet when we think of squalor, grime, and unease... But are these 'general' impressions a true reflection of the spaces they call home? In this segment, we step into the homes of two migrant workers, each having lived in Malaysia for more than a decade, and take a closer look at their living spaces and lifestyles.

Clean bathrooms, spacious bedrooms, and organised kitchens did not await us. Our first visit takes us to the home of Mohamad Salam, who first travelled to Malaysia from Bangladesh when he was only 13 – and before he knew it, 25 years had flown by. Upon stepping into Salam's home, it's the little things we notice: a faulty lightbulb, sticky flooring, messy stuff in odd places.

This humble 1st-storey shop-house is where he eats and sleeps together with many others like him, who hail from a myriad of different countries. But after going through a divorce in 2004, many of his days are spent alone. A photograph of his daughter, his wife, and her other daughter with her new husband hangs on the wall. But still, he speaks to us about his life openly and candidly, showing us the gentle strength and hardened resolve of his character in facing the numerous challenges that life throws at him.

Our second subject, Mohamad Bokter, also hails from Bangladesh. He's worked in a *dobi* shop for 12 years, yet his cheerful personality shines through his upbeat and optimistic view on life. Like many other migrant workers in the city, he lives upstairs from the shop where he works, in a small room packed with belongings and daily necessities. His little sanctuary holds one bed, one cupboard, and one sofa – but the sofa isn't fit for sitting.

It's piled with clothing. Interestingly, we notice that all the clothing is folded similarly and neatly – a long term side-effect of his daily work, perhaps. As the conversation flows along, he speaks most fondly and longingly about his wife. He tells us that she's a legal assistant, currently completing her studies in the UK with his financial support. There's a lot of physical distance between them, but they keep in touch every single day.

PHOTO 11: This humble 1st-storey shop-house is where Mohamad Salam (38 years old) eats and sleeps; many of his days are spent alone in this tiny room

Photo 12: This is the room provides safe sanctuary and a sense of security for the foreign worker like Mohammad

Photo 13: What makes an essence of a home? For a lot of foreign workers,
maybe it is just a place that can make do with living

PHOTO 14: A photograph of his daughter and his "step daughter" which his ex-wife had with her new husband

PHOTO 15: Rice is the staple food for most of the Asian people, even a simple meal cannot be short of rice

PHOTO 16: A chair and a table form a simple living room, everything reduces to minimal

PHOTO 17: Mohamad Mokter (35 years old) works in the dobi shop for 12 years

PHOTO 18: All the clothing is folded in systematic and organised way – a long term side-effect of his daily work

PHOTO 19: Mohamad's cheerful personality shines through his upbeat and optimistic view on life

PHOTO 20: He lives upstairs from the shop where he works with two of his friends, in a small room packed with belongings and daily necessities

Depicting protracted refuge. Postcards from a refugee camp

Pedro Figueiredo Neto, *Social Sciences Institute-University of Lisbon*

ABSTRACT

This essay confronts the viewer with protracted refuge by looking at the Meheba Refugee Camp, Zambia. Created in 1971 and still running well beyond the moment of emergency at its origin, Meheba challenges the generic and generalized visual representation of refugees and refugee camps. This photo-essay seeks to depict how displaced populations forge a life in exile in spite of all the adversities, but also of how the spaces of refuge evolve, consolidate, and become part of the territory in which they are located.

KEYWORDS

photography, crisis, forced displacement, Angola, Zambia, Southern-Africa, humanitarianism, politics of aesthetics

BIO

Pedro Figueiredo Neto is an architect, anthropologist and filmmaker currently post-doctoral research fellow at Social Sciences Institute-University of Lisbon, and Guest Professor at FCSH-NOVA Lisboa. His research interests focus on borders, migration, displacement, violence, and extractivism, mainly in the African context. His work has been showcased in several film festivals and published in international journals. More info at http://pedrofneto.com

pedrofneto@ics.ulisboa.pt

Introduction

As Liisa Malkki poignantly remarked more than two decades ago, "most of us have a strong visual sense of what 'a refugee' looks like" (1995: 9). The same could be said of refugee camps. Visual representations of ever-unfolding refugee crises circulate in the media, social networks and in a myriad of platforms virtually every day, while also making regular appearance in museums, art galleries, films and other outlets (cf. Demos 2013). The customary focus on the time of flight and the subsequent initial deployment of camps and humanitarian aid, or on an alternative framing but in which the emergency and despair prevail, is arguably at the core of such generic and generalized sense of how refugees and refugee camps – should – look like. We have a less clear perspective, if any, about situations of protracted refuge and less mediatized crises.

Indeed, in spite of the plethora of causes, circumstances, contexts and duration of refuge, the visual expressions of displaced individuals and camps invariably resort to a set of purposeful visual tropes. Time goes by and stereotypical representations of refugees and refugee camps remain seemingly unchanged. Particular aesthetic canons that link beauty and horror are part and parcel of this visual culture of refuge. The picturesque –by presenting ragged figures of people, nakedness, ruins– and the sublime –as has been proposed by Edmund Burke, evoking more than human catastrophes, destruction, terror, and in which the shipwreck is one of the most illustrative examples– are among the aesthetic styles most recurrently employed. Common themes arising from Christian iconography also echo in most representations of refugeeness: the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, featuring the physical, psychological and material degradation arising thereof; Mary and Joseph carrying some of their possessions in their "Flight into Egypt"; the walking caravans as in the mass displacement in "Exodus"; or "Madonna and Child" are but a handful of archetypes (Wright 2002: 57). Moreover, the images of displacement and the accompanying captions tend to simplify and reproduce well-known symbolic narrative structures, invariably telling about unambiguous victims, villains and saviors (cf. de Waal 2002). This approach to depicting refuge might reveal to be effective as it draws the attention to existing sensitive situations while eliciting self-identification between the spectator and who/what is being portrayed. Eventually, the perceived "distant suffering" translates into compassion, leading to outsourced action in the form of aid and humanitarian programs (Boltanski 2004). While not dismissing the hardships and suffering of those represented, nor aiming at discrediting the more or less tangible positive effects and outcomes arising from the production and contact with similarly compelling images, this path turns out to be remarkably problematic.

Evident in the privileged position given to snapshots of contingency to the detriment of depictions of an after, the essentialisation of *the refugee* and of *the refugee camp* entails stuckness in time. The way forced displacement is commonly depicted plays a powerful role in how we construct, and on what we perceive, as being the –fixed, changeless – reality of chronic despair. This view curtails alternative perspectives on refuge and the spaces arising thereof, suggesting a missing picture of the *longue durée*. The missing pictures of how displaced populations forge a life in exile and integrate in the local landscape in spite of all the adversities, but also of how the spaces of refuge evolve, consolidate, and become part of the territory in which they are located, could tell us about a lesser-known constellation of stories. This becomes more relevant as we learn about the growing number of protracted refugees living in long-standing camps, which are no longer exceptional spaces, but places – if not cities – in their own right (cf. Jansen 2018). These missing pictures could pave the way for the recognition of individual agency, while restoring the displaced to the present and to a certain "normality". And yet, this does not mean that violence is not there.

Having said this, the set of photographs that follows is an attempt to offer the reader/viewer a glimpse into a long-standing refugee camp. The Meheba Refugee Camp, in Northwestern Province, Zambia, created in 1971 and still running, and whose broader dynamics I have described in detail elsewhere (Neto 2014, 2018, 2019) is a case in point. With these pictures, collected in three different periods of extensive fieldwork (2012, 2014, 2018), captured with different devices, in different formats and sizes (35mm film camera, digital and mobile phone camera), I aim at depicting the normal – or, perhaps better, normalized – life in a (post)humanitarian setting. Absent of this selection are the images of people queuing up for food distribution or vaccination (though from time to time, it does take place), nor undernourished mothers with clingy toddlers (even if such situations do exist), let alone emergency shelters in the form of UNHCR tents (notwithstanding the fact that such plastics are used and rearranged

in creative ways). Thus, with these disputably banal pictures and the complementary descriptive captions, hence provocatively called postcards, I expect to open up the potential of another "imagination" (cf. Azoulay 2012). An imagination that, in spite of all the hardships and constraints lived by refugees still considers their pioneer actions in the process of crafting new settlements, new habitats. An imagination that would allow us to move beyond stuckness in time, to give dignity back to those represented and stimulate further thoughtful debates about refuge and the everyday life in spaces as such. Indeed, as new and complex driving forces of displacement emerge, the spaces of refuge are here to last.

PHOTO 1: Road to nowhere. Meheba's main road to Rd 36, Block D (2012)
The camp extends for more than 720 km², roughly the size of Singapore or the Bahrain,
and is organized in 8 blocks (from A to H). Road 36, in Block D, is Meheba's
administrative and economic center and where most of the existing NGOs are – or have been – based.

PHOTO 2: Warming up. Football field near Road 18, Block B (2012)
After church services on Sunday, football matches attract people from all over Meheba and the from the villages in the camp's surroundings. Block B and Block D are the most densely populated and cosmopolitan blocks and host the best teams. As of 2018, Meheba officially counted with a refugee population of some 18.000 individuals, most of which from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In early 2000s, during the last period of war in Angola, the camp reached a population of more than 50.000 displaced people, 90% from Angola.

Photo 3: Gents. School restrooms, Block B (2012)
Restrooms' distribution illustrate the gender imbalance in terms of enrollment. Meheba schools also count with students from as far as Lusaka and Livingstone. This is mostly due to the fact that schools in the camp are perceived as of higher quality standards than elsewhere in the country. One of the teachers in the camp, a refugee from Rwanda, once shared his dream: that Meheba would host a university, that the camp was transformed into a *campus*.

PHOTO 4: Real estate dynamics. House for sale in Block D (2014)
The renting and selling of houses and agricultural plots is supposedly disallowed in refugee camps (as locally defined by the Zambian Refugee Control Act of 1970, as well as by the UNHCR). This does not mean that people do not try and do sell their houses, namely when moving elsewhere, upon repatriation or otherwise. Moreover, mining activities in the vicinity of Meheba have attracted a growing number of individuals seeking accommodation. This has resulted in a relatively dynamic real estate market within the camp.

PHOTO 5: Between camp and town. Minibus to and from Solwezi (2018)
Two minibuses travel between Meheba and the nearest city of Solwezi (some 70km from the camp, on EN-2) on a daily basis. People travel to Solwezi in order to handle paperwork, buy a myriad of different items which are inexistent in the camp or cheaper in town, get money remittances, sell agricultural surplus, and/or visit relatives and friends. Refugees moving outside the camp are supposed to hold gate passes issued by the administration offices in Meheba. As a result of widespread corruption practices and the legal constraint of a maximum of thirty days duration for gate passes, it is not unusual to acknowledge "special" permits issued against the payment of extra fees. In addition, travelers and minibus drivers face further bribing by Zambian police officers in the checkpoints along the way.

PHOTO 6: Leaving no traces. Administrative housing ensemble in Block B (2018)
Fidel and his family lived in the camp until 2016 when his mother, a Zambian nurse, and his father, a retired Angolan teacher and fierce supporter of MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, the Marxist-Leninist inspired political party), had to move to Solwezi. After Fidel's father retirement the family was no longer entitled to live in the houses that compose the administrative housing ensemble of Block B. In 2017 Fidel moved to Lusaka to enroll in a medical school. In 2018, the house remained empty.

PHOTO 7: Past skills. House in Block D (2014)
Terracotta roof tiles can be found in a number of houses in Meheba, namely among Angolans. The owner of the house depicted above left Angola in early 1994. His father was a colonial mason master. Most inhabitants in Meheba resort to thatch-roofing whose assembly and maintenance is inexpensive. Aluminum roofing sheets are increasingly present and preferred among the camp's communities given their transportability and market value.

PHOTO 8: Queuing up. Meeting with road and block leaders, UNHCR lodge (2014)
Road and block leaders regularly meet with the camps' administration (the UNHCR and Zambian governmental authorities) to discuss relevant issues such as repatriation procedures, local integration opportunities, third country resettlement requests, food and health needs, schooling, gender violence, etc. The UNHCR lodge is now walled for security precautions and administrative meetings no longer include meals.
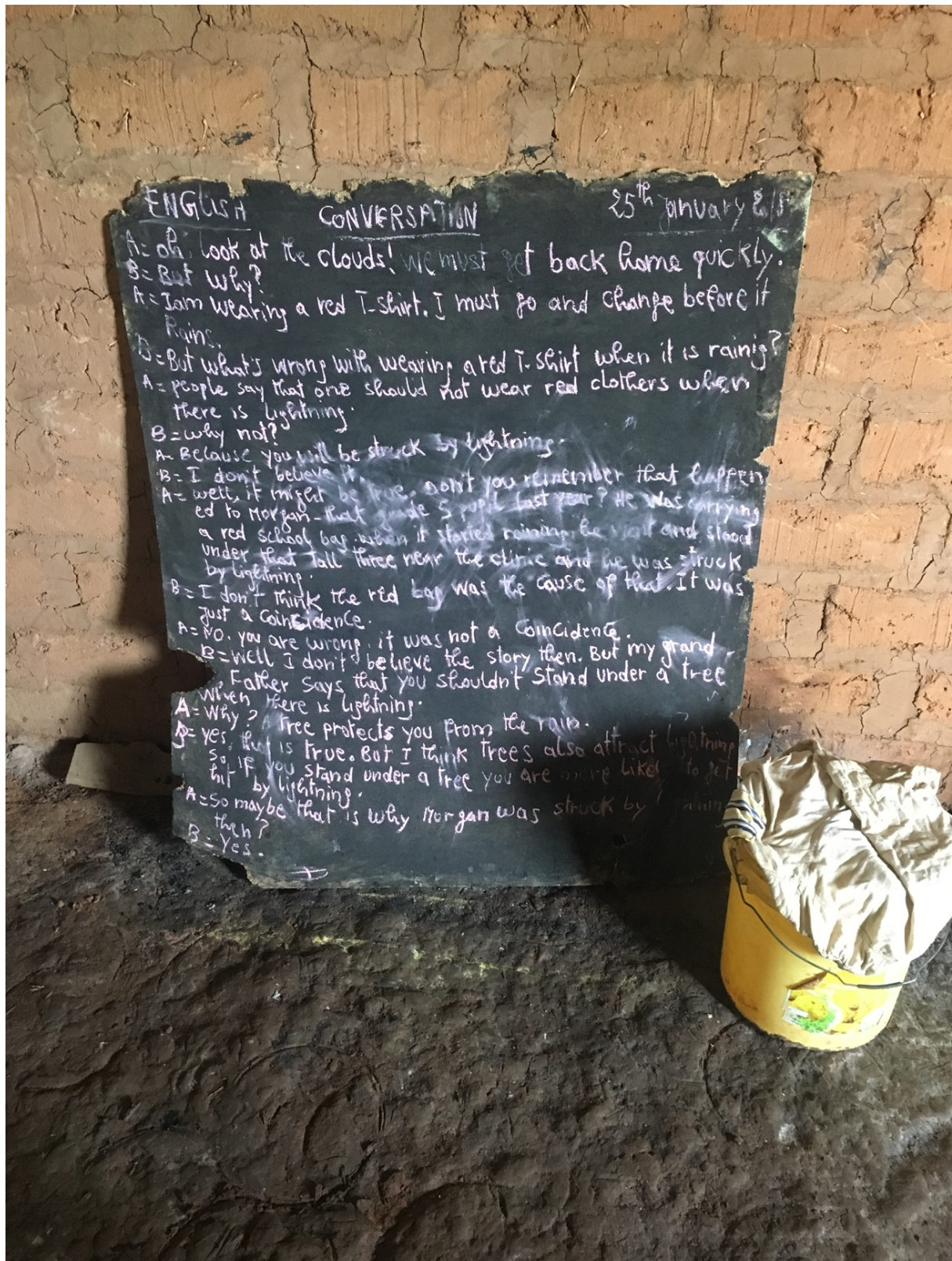
PHOTO 9: English conversations. Blackboard in a Congolese house, Block D (2018)
A family of four orphans from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recently arrived in Meheba, tries to catch
up with English by reading stories from an old blackboard. Episodic arrivals of DRC nationals, namely
unaccompanied minors and often orphans, reflect the constant outbreaks of violence in the country.
Currently, Congolese constitute the major group of humanitarian concern in Meheba. Still,
these come from very different provinces and belong to different ethno-linguistic groups.

PHOTO 10: On wire. House in Block D (2018)
Solar panels are not uncommon in the camp, but only a small number of households own fuel-powered generators.
Batteries allow the charging of mobile phones and provide power for TV displays.
Satellite dishes ensure access to local and international broadcasters and DVDs and Supervideo CDs,
sold in the camp's markets, bring the latest Holly-, Bolly-, Nolly-, and Bongowood productions.

PHOTO 11: Ruins. School sign in Rd 36, Zone D (2014)
The existence of ruins is illustrative of the passage of time and sheds light into the long
duration of camps well beyond the emergency at their origin.

PHOTO 12: Riding the camp. Road 36, Block D (2014)
Weekday in the busiest street of Meheba.

PHOTO 13: Like any Zambian village. Housing and agriculture plot, Block C (2014)
Most houses in Meheba are made of adobe house with roof-thatched roof resembling those
in the camp's surrounding villages. Beyond the plot for housing, each
household is allocated farmland upon arrival and is expected to attain self-sufficiency.

PHOTO 14: UNHCR sheets, House in Block D (2014)
As time goes by people settle down, improve their houses, devote their time to agriculture production and care for their gardens. The plastic sheets provided by the UNHCR upon arrival are often later used in roofing insulation.

PHOTO 15: *T-Junction* (2014)
T-junction is the name given to the urban settlement that sprouted at Meheba's gate and where many refugees come to sell their agricultural surplus. The junction is a stopping point for trucks and buses driving the main national road connecting Solwezi with the border with Angola. Plans to create a new town have been discussed and would comprise T-junction and Meheba's block A and B.

PHOTO 16: The gate is a mental frontier. Meheba Refugee Settlement gate (2014)
The gate police halted its functions in 2013. The camp's perimeter is not fenced and there is
virtually no control on who/what enters or leaves the camp's premises.

PHOTO 17: Keep Meheba clean. Central Market, Block D (2014)
The marketplace in Block D condenses the most varied produce grown in the camp (maize, rice, cassava, tomatoes,
pineapples, mangoes, cabbage, groundnuts, etc) while also offering a myriad of shops and services (wholesale shops, video
shops, mobile banking, phone houses, barber/hairdresser, bicycle repair workshops, restaurant and bars,
restaurants, tailors, etc). Meheba once had a garbage collection system in place.

PHOTO 18: From Refugee Alliance to Brave Heart. NGO headquarters, Rd 36 (2014)
In 2014, Refugee Alliance was the only NGO operating in the camp. The team was comprised of a group of three young volunteers from Norway that provided unskilled support in the local clinic and supervised kids in an improvised kindergarten.
A group of doctors operating under the RA umbrella made erratic presence.
In 2018 the NGO changed the name to Brave Heart but had no ongoing activities.

PHOTO 19: Closed doors and windows. Former World Food Program office (2014)
WFP offices closed in early 2000s. Nowadays, food supplies from the WFP or any other donor are erratic notwithstanding the periods of shortage. Ever since the end of the conflict in Angola (1961-2002), and in spite of the continuous arrival of refugees from the DRC and from other geographies, aid programmes have diminished substantially.

PHOTO 20: The elephant in the room. North-American School bus, Block C (2018)
In spite of the good intentions at the origin of this gift, the fact is that this old North-American School Bus
has never been used. Most people walk or cycle within the camp.

REFERENCES

AZOULAY, Ariella
2012   *Civil Imagination. A Political Ontology of Photography*, London/New York: Verso.

BOLTANSKI, Luc
2004   *Distant Suffering. Morality, Media and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DEMOS, T,J
2013   *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis*, Durham & London: Duke University Press.

JANSEN, Bram J
2018   *Kakuma Refugee Camp. Humanitarian Urbanism in Kenya's accidental city*. London: Zed Books.

MALKKI, Liisa H.
1995   *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

NETO, Pedro Figueiredo
2019   Displacement, Refuge and Urbanisation: From Refugee Camps to Ecovillages, in Borders and Refuge: Citizenship, Mobility and Planning in a Volatile World (ed. L. Porter), *Planning Theory and Practice*, 20(1):99-128
2018   Ambiguous boundaries between inclusion and exclusion. Experiences from the Meheba Refugee Camp (Zambia). In Aboim, S., Granjo, P., Ramos, A. (Eds.) *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges. Ambiguous Inclusions: Inside Out, Inside In Vol. 1*, pp.29-47, Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais
2014   Meheba: Le camp de réfugiés angolais en Zambie depuis 1971 et la question du retour des réfugiés en Angola. In Michel Agier (Ed.) *Un Monde de Camps*, pp.61-71La Découverte

DE WAAL, Alex
2002   Anthropology and the Aid encounter. In J. MacClancy (ed.) *Exotic no More. Anthropology on the front lines*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp.251-269

WRIGHT, Terence
2002   Moving images: the media representation of refugees, *Visual Studies* 17(1): 53-66

Karrustulinda: a reflexive approach to the carnival of forgiveness

James León Parra-Monsalve, *Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Colombia*
Jonnathan Blake Pinto Caviedes, *Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Colombia*

ABSTRACT

As usual, every year, during the days before Ash Wednesday, the *Karrustulinda* is celebrated. This carnival integrates the indigenous people of Putumayo (Colombia) around forgiveness and gratitude to the *Pachamama* for her fertility. The Inga and Kamëntsá peoples sing in their languages, accompanied by percussion and wind instruments, while visiting the Mocoa *cabildos* and other institutions, where the festivity is concentrated. This photo-essay focuses on this secular tradition, in its 2020 version, from a walk-through moments and scenarios in which the also called Carnival of Forgiveness takes place.

KEYWORDS

Inga, Kamëntsá, carnival of forgiveness, cultural heritage, Putumayo, participant objectivation, visual culture, Colombia

BIO

James León Parra-Monsalve, Social Communicator and Journalist, M.Sc. in History, and Ph.D. in Development Planning. He has worked in print media, where he reaffirmed his passion for photography and, since 2004, has been working with organizations and communities in the Colombian Amazon region. During his master's research he traveled the Putumayo River, where he documented the history of the jaguar skin trade in the 20th century. Later, in his doctoral thesis, he analyzed the meanings of digital communication in Amazonian indigenous organizations in Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. He currently works as a researcher and professor in Graphic Communication at UNIMINUTO.
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1592-0101

Jonnathan Blake Pinto Caviedes, Bachelor of Fine Arts from Universidad Nacional de Colombia, with emphasis on History and Theory of Art and New Media. He holds a M.A. in Media from Universidad de Chile. His artistic creation and research are focused on the expression of the symbolic and the dreamlike, also with great interest in medieval alchemy and psychoanalysis; his work revolves around video art, installation and sound experimentation. He has made several exhibitions and projections in Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Argentina and France. He is currently the Coordinator of the Graphic Communication Technology program at UNIMINUTO.
https://vimeo.com/jonnathanblake

jparramons1@uniminuto.edu
jonnathan.pinto@uniminuto.edu

Introduction

Posing is to respect oneself and demand respect.
Pierre Bourdieu

The *Karrustulinda* (Inga), *Bëtsknaté* (Kamëntsá) or Carnival of Forgiveness (English) is the most complete representation of the cultural syncretism achieved by the indigenous groups of the Putumayo region in Colombia. It is a festival celebrated especially by the Inga and Kamëntsá peoples during the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. An occasion in which the own and the foreign, to use the already well-known approach of Bonfil Batalla (1997), are amalgamated in a territory and a history. During these two days, whose preparation begins in the previous months, families and *cabildos* (as the administrative structures of Colombia's indigenous territorial entities are known) visit and meet to recall their common past and make forgiveness the key motif of the carnival.

A festivity that indicates a change of era from contact, which summarizes the reading of an indigenous coexistence with the foreigner from the native point of view, which is at the same time the result and product of that encounter (Quiñones, 2019). It is necessary to emphasize here that the presence of one's own culture implies an autonomous response capacity, a space where initiative and creativity are made concrete, including the struggle in the symbolic terrain, to which people frequently resort when faced with disproportionate pressure (Bonfil, 1997). In this way, cultural practices reveal the power of response of those peoples who have known how to transform their social dynamics in the face of processes of colonization and evangelization. The contact does not represent the end, even though it demands a cultural reformulation that protects what is own and amalgamates with what is not, in order to exist and persist.

A history in which the academy traditionally elaborates discourses that are postulated from the scientific authority in which knowledge about the other is constructed. This also involves the collection of evidence with different techniques such as observation, participant observation, logs, interviews, focus groups, among others, which result in textual, sound, visual, audiovisual, digital records, validated as such by professionals in the scientific field. This perspective is already problematic, mainly from the critical and participatory approaches of social research, although it is not very widespread among state, business and industrial practices of knowledge production, which generally follow the positivist horizon of science.

In view of such a panorama, it is advisable to include interdisciplinary methods in the ethnographic exercise that aim to counteract the hegemonic vision about peoples and cultures. This is why it welcomes the call to transcend the work of documentary photography in order to seek narratives that make knowledge about subjects and peoples viable, beyond a product for observation; narratives that actively involve the subject, photographer and spectator, as the protagonists of the photographic act (Lopez, 2013). To think photography, outside the context of the technique itself, as a form of dialogical engagement (Dietrich, 2019) among those involved in the production of images for research purposes.

Indeed, an approach was followed in which visual supports are not only focused on describing, interpreting or illustrating a social reality, but on creating and imagining new exegeses of social experience through visual methods (Leon-Quijano, 2017). An approach that is nourished by the participating objectivation (Bourdieu, 2005) as a possibility of reflection on one's own academic practice in the social context. A practice that, in the case of photography benefits, as a technique and social case, from its consideration as an authentic reproducer of reality. As Bourdieu (2003) states, photography owes both to the social image of

the technical object that produces it and to its social case, the fact that it is commonly considered the most perfectly faithful reproduction of reality (Bourdieu, 2003).

This common perception about photography and the real is manifested in the act of posing or not for the camera, which can only be understood in relation to the symbolic system in which it is inscribed, that which defines for the people of countryside the behaviors, norms and convenient forms in the relationship with others (Bourdieu, 2003). Therefore, for those who capture photographs there is also a trajectory of experiences and institutional relations that are incorporated into the way of thinking about research with images.

In the carnival the researchers' cameras are confused with the cameras of the participants who also

record it, although their purposes are different. This type of festive gathering continues to be key to recording and sharing photographs. But, nowadays, they are intensified by abundance of devices that capture digital files of musicians, dancers, marchers, walkers, and so on. Considering this context, walking was also chosen as an ethnographic method for research. A method in which the eye and other senses act while the body is mobilized; where the visual knowledge cannot be separated from the work of the other senses (Marano, 2018). In this way, multiple visual registers were achieved in which it is evident to go with the carnival, to follow the steps that, at the same time, constitute a narrative about the meeting of cultures in the "Big Day", as the festivity is also known.

The photographic practice, as a ritual of solemnization and consecration of the group and the world, perfectly fulfills the deep intentions of the popular aesthetic of the celebration, of the communication with others, and of the communion with the world (Bourdieu, 2003). More specifically, in the case of this photo essay, it is also a resource for research and representation (Campos, 2011) that leads to a visual narrative about the *Karrustulinda*. Certainly, visual technologies are effective collaborators in the analysis of visible particularities, being something already common in anthropology and sociology, but that makes its way into psychology, cultural studies and communication sciences (Campos, 2011).

Thus, the research process integrated digital curatorial elements of the images collected during the fieldwork in February 2020. To this end, 100 pictures were shared, of which 20 of the best evaluated by the focus group are presented here. Then the sequence was organized, considering the movement of the carnival during the photographic accompaniment: home, *cabildo*, street. The pictures are followed by explanatory notes and diverse reflections on the photographic practice and the Carnival of Forgiveness context.

Finally, if, as highlighted in the epigraph, posing is to respect oneself and demand respect, it is up to ethnography to incorporate reflexive and collaborative paths on its research and representation resources. In the present case, it involves a visual research for the publication of significant photographs of the *Karrustulinda* 2020 in Mocoa, Putumayo. The images validated by the focus group were thus the base for a reflection on this respect and demand for respect from those who pose. In this way, the gaze of the positivist scientist is also questioned.

Home

PHOTO 1: At home each family prepares a great meal for the festival participants. This functions as the starting point of the carnival, is prepared by the women of the community and, like the practice of the celebration itself, is an immaterial custom of society that is only found in memory. The fact of preparing a great meal is a fundamental value, it is a kind of "putting oneself in the mode of" or at the disposition of others with the intention that through the taste for it - which is impossible to describe with words because it is a knowledge transmitted from generation to generation - it functions as a point of encounter and dialogue.

PHOTO 2: Part of the collective memory is manifested by preparation of specific meals in the communities involved. Here an example with the groundwork of a fermented banana (*Musa paradisiaca*) drink, called "anduche", typical of the region. In addition to the banana, which came to these lands via colonization, drinks are also prepared from *chontaduro* (*Bactris gasipaes)*, *yuca* (*Manihot aipi)* and corn (*Zea mays*), typical regional fruits. The use of these vegetable varieties thus reinforces the human appreciation for their millenary domestication and the relationship of the carnival with the fertility of the *Pachamama*.

PHOTO 3: Once the groundworks have been made, the families visit each other and the *cabildos*, being received with music, dances, fermented drinks and lots of food. It is Monday and the *Karrustulinda* has just begun.

PHOTO 4: The carnival involves community members of all ages. The local schools prepare activities to be presented in each of the visits they make to the houses and *cabildos* in the area. It is an occasion par excellence for the knowledge of the indigenous cultural practices of the Inga and Kamëntsá peoples by other ethnic groups that inhabit the surrounding territories.

Photo 5: The communities are very interested in transmitting traditions to new generations through clothing and music, making them active participants in the carnival.

Cabildo

PHOTO 6: The *Taita* Miguel is one of the last traditional musicians of the area. The fact of transmitting a sonorous knowledge, as it can be the own language, the food, the games, the songs or the music, also makes part of the experience of the carnival, full of ephemeral and intangible manifestations that remain and last in the territory and the communities. He is also an indigenous healer and traditional authority of the Inga Cabildo of Condagua, having been governor of his community for several years. For this reason, he represents a recognizable link between the world of the family and the world of the management of public affairs related to the *resguardo*, as the territorial space in which community life takes shape is known.

Photo 7: It's time to walk to the *cabildo* hall. The women of the Inga village dress up in their traditional *headdresses* and are gradually joined by family and friends. It is Monday afternoon, and the festival is taking on its true community dimension.

PHOTO 8: After the reception of the visitors in the houses, visits are made to the *cabildos* of the region where they also share dances, music, food and drink.

The Inga women play an essential role in the groundwork and celebration of *Karrustulinda*. In their different roles, as grandmothers, aunts, mothers, sisters, teachers or traditional authorities (governors, sheriffs, mayors, healers), they constitute a necessary link in the transmission of the language and culture of their people. Thanks to them, in good part, this indigenous culture survives despite the accentuated historical colonization of their ancestral lands, especially in Caquetá, Putumayo and Nariño, in the southwest of the current Colombian territory.

PHOTO 9: During the carnival the *cabildo* (political-administrative figure inherited from colonial times) hall becomes a true space of community meeting. There they share the food and drinks that every year accompany the festivities, both with locals and strangers. Fraternity is exalted during these days. People dance, sing and make the dry seeds of their necklaces sound, which imitate the sound of water gushing into the mountains. The party begins in the morning and lasts until late at night, when euphoria still reigns, and the effects of fermented drinks appear in the dancing bodies.

Street

PHOTO 10: It's carnival Tuesday. After the visit of the most remote *cabildos*, the communities make a complete tour of the city of Mocoa, capital of the department of Putumayo. The collective nature of this celebration is becoming more and more evident.

PHOTO 11: After the emergency caused by the flooding of the Sangoyaco stream in 2017 (which divided its flow into three parts and caused, according to a report by the Colombian Red Cross, the death of at least 1,400 people), the ties between the Inga and Kamëntsá communities have been strengthened even further, mainly in cultural spaces and activities such as carnival. The carnival is a vital manifestation of a profane, traditional and popular celebration that exteriorizes contents and intentions to reinforce ancestral symbols, healing experiences and to strengthen ties between individuals of the community, being this celebration also a learning experience in a context of memory and freedom. So, the red-mask *Matachín*, an aged man, leads the indigenous people in the streets, recalling their common cultural past and the elder's significance for the continuity of this cultural manifestation.

PHOTO 12: Based on a participatory exercise of photographic appreciation by traditional indigenous authorities, members of their communities and other people close to this cultural manifestation, this picture was chosen as one of the most representative of the carnival spirit. The joy of the elders is the happiness of the indigenous collective that parades through the streets wearing their typical costumes and the colorful feather crowns of macaws, toucans and other birds of the Andean Amazon region. The feather crowns are a visual symbol of the shamans, who have knowledge of traditional medicine. Otherwise, it is a unique moment for the transmission of culture between generations. It is also the moment when locals and strangers converge in the public spaces of the city, next to cars, motorcycles, bicycles and passers-by who record the marching crowd through their cell phone cameras.

PHOTO 13: *Karrustulinda*, *Bëtsknaté*, Big Day or Carnival of Forgiveness, different denominations in the indigenous languages and in English, for a festivity that has been incorporated into the cultural heritage of Colombians. The local and regional institutions, as well as the non-indigenous inhabitants, recognize it as a reference of the indigenous traditions. In truth, it is difficult to separate there what is proper and what is not, because these carnivals, which also precede Christian Lent, contain an abundance of cosmovision elements from the people who keep this cultural exhibition alive.

PHOTO 14: Women in indigenous communities are the ones who are most committed to keeping the various traditions active, which comes from an obvious connection of being a woman who gives life, protects it, directs it and teaches it. Their fertility reminds the fertility of *Pachamama*, which is also a reason to be grateful for this season of carnival.

PHOTO 15: An important moment for the community is the visit to the church and the participation in the Eucharist, when they also perform songs accompanied by the instruments used during the carnival. Here it is evident that the church is also part of the places visited during the walk through the city. Thanks to these practices, the social ties historically established and that today are part of the syncretism of the indigenous celebration are understood.

PHOTO 16: After attending mass, the communities take over the urban public space. In Mocoa's main square they share and socialize among themselves, demonstrating the fact that the carnival invades the town and travels through almost everything. In their journey through the city, the marchers renew their intercultural relations. The Catholic Church continues to be an important actor in a region historically ruled by religious orders (Capuchins, Marists, Franciscans), in the face of the secular inability of the Colombian State to bring education and welfare to the until 1991 so-called "National Territories". Territories of that other Colombia, always forgotten by the Bogota's centralism.

PHOTO 17: The march advances on Tuesday along the streets of Mocoa, various settlements, hamlets and nearby paths, where grateful visits with songs, music and dances are made. Social ties continue to be renewed. Visits are made to other institutions that have provided valuable services to the communities, such as Corpoamazonia, an entity in charge of environmental management and sustainable development in the departments of Amazonas, Caquetá and Putumayo.

PHOTO 18: Diversity of perceptions about the indigenous festival can be manifested through the multiple semantic layers that the photographic image gives. The approach made from photography allows to make tangible what is intangible, deep and inherent to a specific community, and to give a fragment of it for the reading through a cultural look. The fact of mobilizing together with the Inga and Kamëntsá peoples, particularly in the city streets and in the institutions, also shows the community's willingness to communicate aspects of their cultural practices. Even if one does not become an intrinsic part of them, by reflecting and questioning about the position of the researchers in the celebration, moving away from a positivist perspective, from the pretension of establishing general and immutable truths, one walks towards a respectful encounter with the others.

PHOTO 19: The climax of *Bëtsknaté* for the Kamëntsá people comes when a rooster is sacrificed. The animal is hung from a wooden structure decorated with branches and flowers which is called "castle". Several participants compete until one of them manages to dismember the bird's head.   Although this is a polysemic ritual, it is clear the symbolism associated with the colonizers, who introduced the animal species several centuries ago. It is therefore a practice of symbolic triumph over the culture of others, which momentarily transforms the history of the victors in this ritual context.
It must be said that the pictures of the dismembered animal were narrowly valued by the focal group as an object that visually denoted the carnival. In this way, the visual aspect of the sacrifice itself becomes secondary, being a rite and a moment that cannot be fully understood through the photographs.

Home (*Maloca*)

FIGURE 20: One cycle closes, and another begins. It is Ash Wednesday and the *Karrustulinda*, in its 2020 version, is over. The Inga and Kamëntsá peoples return to their daily tasks. In the malocas (large multipurpose community structures, made with regional materials) the renewal of fire gives an account of the new time. A time of reflection begins, a return to the issues that are indispensable for community life, which will be guided, as is tradition, by the shamanic visions of *yagé* or *ayahuasca*, the spiritual guide of these indigenous peoples.

REFERENCES

BONFIL BATALLA, Guillermo
1997   *Pensar nuestra cultura, ensayos*. México: Alianza Editorial.

BOURDIEU, Pierre
2003   *Un arte medio. Ensayo sobre los usos sociales de la fotografía*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.
2005   La objetivación participante. *Apuntes de Investigación del CECYP* 9(10): 87-101.

CAMPOS, Ricardo
2011   Imagem e tecnologias visuais em pesquisa social: tendências e desafios. *Análise Social* XLVI(199): 237-259.

DIETRICH, Martha-Cecilia
2019   Poetic Visuality. An Essay on the Carceral Experience. *Visual Ethnography* 8 (2).
        https://doi.org/10.12835/ve2018.1-0132

GOPI, Anil
2020   *Creating Pantheon-Nature, Colours and Beliefs: A Visual Narrative of Kaliyattam in Kerala*. 9 (1): 21.

LEON-QUIJANO, Camilo
2017   Visual Ethnography: Tools, Archives and Research Methods. Introduction. *Visual Ethnography* 6 (1): 7-17.
        https://doi.org/10.12835/ve2017.1-0073

LOPEZ YUSTE, Maria
2013   Telling about the other. Identity, narratives and the limits of the photographic medium. *Visual Ethnography* 2 (2): 1-20.

MARANO, Francesco
2018   The Three Cities of Beijing. *Visual Ethnography* 7 (1):123-135.
        https://doi.org/10.12835/ve2018.1-0106

MARINI, G.
2020   Altars, Statues, Murals: 'Religious' Visualities Of Primary Schools in Santiago de Chile. *Visual Ethnography* 9 (1): 159-169.

QUIÑONES TRIANA, Yago
2019   Bëtsknaté, el carnaval del perdón del pueblo Kamëntsá. Interpretaciones sobre el contacto y la transformación cultural entre historia y mito. *Maguaré* 33 (1): 109-138.
        https://doi.org/10.15446/mag.v33

Maya Stovall
Liquor Store Theatre. Durham: Duke University Press.
https://www.dukeupress.edu/liquor-store-theatre

For six years Maya Stovall staged Liquor Store Theatre, a conceptual art and anthropology video project –included in the Whitney Biennial in 2017– in which she danced near the liquor stores in her Detroit neighborhood as a way to start conversations with her neighbors. In this book of the same name, Stovall uses the project as a point of departure for understanding everyday life in Detroit and the possibilities for ethnographic research, art, and knowledge creation. Her conversations with her neighbors –which touch on everything from economics, aesthetics, and sex to the political and economic racism that undergirds Detroit's history– bring to light rarely acknowledged experiences of longtime Detroiters. In these exchanges, Stovall enacts an innovative form of ethnographic engagement that offers new modes of integrating the social sciences with the arts in ways that exceed what either approach can achieve alone.

Maya Stovall is an American conceptual artist and anthropologist. She is an assistant professor at California State Polytechnic University.
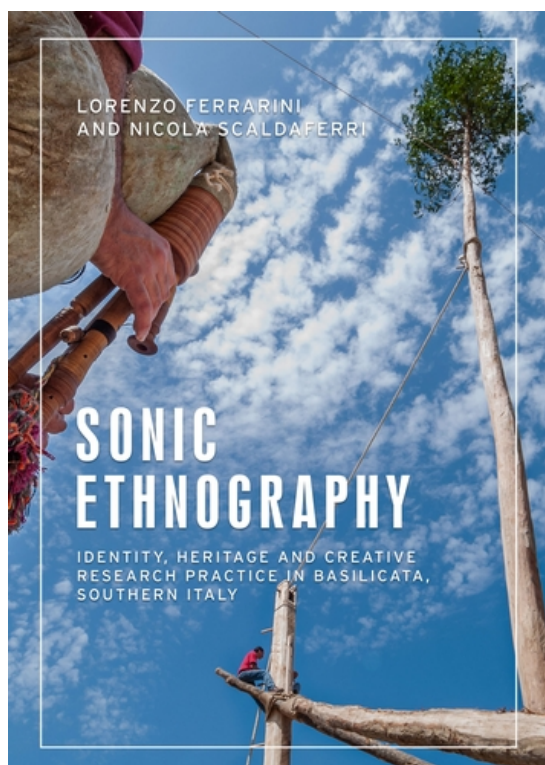
Lorenzo Ferrarini, Nicola Scaldaferri (eds)
Sonic ethnography. Identity, heritage and creative research practice in Basilicata, southern Italy. Manchester: Manchester Unversity Press.
https://www.dukeupress.edu/liquor-store-theatre

Sonic ethnography makes a compelling argument for taking sound seriously as a crucial component of social life and as an ethnographic form of representation. This volume explores the role of sound-making and listening practices in the formation of local identities in the southern Italian region of Basilicata. With an approach that cuts across sensory anthropology, sound studies and ethnomusicology, Sonic ethnography demonstrates how acoustic tradition is made and disrupted and acoustic communities are brought together in shared temporality and space. Based extensive research, this volume provides an innovative take on soundful cultural performances such as tree rituals, carnivals, pilgrimages and more informal musical performances, with particular attention to the interactions between classic ethnographic scholarship from the past century and the local politics of heritage.

Featuring stunning colour photographs and more than an hour of sound recordings, Sonic ethnography uses a unique combination of media to investigate distinctive ways of knowing, beyond more traditional ethnographic forms of representation. Two methodological chapters, respectively on music-making as creative research practice and on photo-ethnography, make the book an essential contribution for those interested in the production of sounds and still images as relational and interactive approaches to fieldwork. The pioneering anthropologist of sound, Steven Feld, collaborated to some of the research and contributed to the book an afterword and a soundscape composition.

Lorenzo Ferrarini is a Lecturer in Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester.
Nicola Scaldaferri is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology at the University of Milan.