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The Border:

Resisting monocultures in Central Italy

Abstract:
A new border between those who are seeking to divides the rural peripheries of central Italy, a border between those seeking to safeguard a varied agricultural landscape and those hoping for easy money. According to the "Italy Hazelnut Plan", 20,000 hectares of new hazelnut plantations are planned in central Italy alone, but the globalization of the agricultural model based on large monocultures represents a problem of global dimensions and is described by Donna Haraway and Anna L. Tsing as "plantationocene", accelerating climate change, impoverishes local economic fabrics and pollutes soils and aquifers. The documentary portrays a group of people trying to resist the multiple effects of monocrops, building alternative economies and buying land to remove them from the sphere of influence of multinational companies.

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"Listen, listen! Now they're coming. They come again to spray pesticides. I have to run." It was one of the hottest days of summer 2022. The air stood still around us, while the inclement sun seemed to burn the endless rows of small hazelnut trees. Everywhere, the land was dry and dusty. At that moment I was with Claudio on the terrace of his newly renovated house. Endless rows of monoculture hazelnut groves stretched out behind a large flat plateau. The lines apparently reached all the way to the horizon, silent, uniform, and orderly. Claudio seemed agitated. "And they have no permission to do so. They are criminals," he added. "Go and see! I'll run inside, otherwise I'll end up back in the emergency room." From afar we could hear the noise of a tractor; little by little the noise became more intense. At that precise moment I felt a strong shiver, a shiver due to the awareness in which for the first time I intuitively understood the severity of the conflict between different ways of understanding the relationship between man and plants, one focused on maximizing profits and another way focused on respect, on the valorization of the wild world. Claudio is not alone: everywhere, the impact of the systematic introduction of monoculture leaves profound marks on local life, both human and non-human.

Based on ethnographic research between 2021 and 2023 that aims to investigate the social impact of the introduction of new plantations and monocultures in central Italy, in this documentary I present emblematic ethnographic cases of resistance against the increasing challenge of monocrops: those who decided to buy additional lands to 'protect' his home, those who didn't succeed and those who became environmental activists. Following an initial exploratory phase to determine the dimension and forms of environmental activism in relation to the introduction of new monocultures, in a second phase I carried out five in-depth and long-term studies, three of which are present here. Beyond specific cases, these forms of resistance practically lead to a broader transformation of the relationship between citizens and the environment, between humans and plants. These are dynamics already known in other regions of the world: On the one hand it is a conflict studied at a global level around the incessant expansion of contemporary agribusiness which incorporates and standardizes more and more land, communities, and biodiversity spaces; On the other hand, this conflict allows to understand the effects of the modernization and globalization in the countryside.

LINK:
https://youtu.be/wlgrTq8cSZw