CONSERVATION—CONSUMPTION

PRESERVING THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE VALUES

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excerpt

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I CAMMINI D'ITALIA: ITALY'S ROUTES. LOCAL ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

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"As 2016 was the national year of walking routes, 2017 the national year of villages and 2018 the year of Italian food, 2019 will be the year of slow tourism". So said Dario Franceschini, the Italian Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism at the end of 2017 during a presentation of the Digital Atlas of Walking Routes. This is the Ministry's new portal for tourists who want to travel across Italy at a slow pace.

"2019 year of slow tourism will be an additional way" – said the Minister – "to enhance the areas of Italy that are still unknown to international travellers and relaunch them in a sustainable way, promoting innovative travel experiences, from historical trains with panoramic views to cultural itineraries, walking routes, cycle paths and horse riding. Investing in sustainable tourism is a development strategy that has the purpose of protecting and relaunching in an innovative way the places, memories, knowledge and craftsmanship that make our country a unique place: a virtuous beauty circle that is incredibly widespread across its territory and throughout the centuries. It is a key strategy to control the growth of the expected tourist flows in the next few years"[1].

The emphasis placed on the word 'slow' in press releases and on the web, as a defining feature of a new type of 'sustainable' tourism as opposed to the logics of today's high-speed society, doesn't only evoke an escape from an often unsustainable pace of life. Walking down a route slowly, reclaiming space as a main factor in social relationships, can take on a deeper and more complex meaning. The route is not just a line marked on the map in the portal, with a starting point, some intermediate stops and a final destination; 'slow' walking is a way of moving, a 'vehicle' (a medium, as were the cars and roads in the early 20th century) that can greatly affect not only the meanings and messages it aims to deliver, but also and above all the recipients of the message itself (Mc Luhan 2015: 29-41). The value of walking is not so much in its final destination, but above all in what comes during and through the journey itself. Many months spent along the same roads to the Cathedral of Santiago have historically allowed for a fruitful exchange of relationships, information, knowledge and ideas, not just among pilgrims, but also with the local people. Historically speaking, a pilgrim is also a man who is curious and attentive to everything around him, participating in the local life, in the construction of the cathedral, offering his labour in exchange for food and lodging, reaching beyond Santiago to the beaches in Finisterre, to the limits of the known world, and collecting shells as proof of his journey. As a witness and interpreter, the pilgrim unknowingly becomes a cultural operator who weaves a dense warp of information between a city and another and between a country and another (Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 41).

The website www.camminiditalia.it, the official digital map of Italy's routes, is a container of paths and itineraries designed to make about 6600 km of routes (and the areas around them) across the country accessible and known to travellers, promoting a new

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kind of tourism, as if they were some sort of an intermodal 'green way' infrastructure. The portal contains more than 40 different routes: some pilgrimage paths (Franciscan, Benedictine and Lauretano's paths), brigands' trails (across Aspromonte), Dante's journey (the places of his exile, where he wrote the Divine Comedy), the path of Peace (places and memories of the First World War), the Appian Way, the Way of the Gods, the Romea Germanica Way and many more. Among these, the Via Francigena is clearly the one that provides the greatest wealth of information.

The Italian State, Regions, Municipalities, local entities and public and private operators have worked together to create this map of Routes and the local resources connected to them – a widespread heritage of art, landscape, spirituality and food – which also meets the need to promote the economy of lesser known local areas, by proposing new additions to the portal based on some predetermined criteria.

The launch of the *Cammini d'Italia* network is certainly an effort to re-balance the local tourist pressure, characterised by unsustainable peaks in the most extreme and known cases, where public administrations have been incapable to find any alternative solutions to reduce the intensity of access (Venice, Florence among the cities of art, Limone del Garda, the Cinque Terre National Park, to mention the most famous and controversial destinations).

The launch of the *Cammini d'Italia* network is also a way to develop the productivity of some parts of our cultural heritage, and the surrounding settlements, which are unaffected by tourist pressure, underused, marginalised, perhaps even depressed, but still capable of triggering synergistic and regenerative processes.

But, more generally, the launch of *Cammini d'Italia*, seen as a local tourist promotion strategy, embodies "the art of adding value"[2], as a necessary action to safeguard, protect, maintain and manage the cultural heritage that abounds in this Country.

The identification of the Routes and their conscious and sustainable use by tourists can't however be limited to the mere identification of a theme, a track, some intermediate stops and the supporting resorts and facilities[3]. For now, these are the details contained in the portal for most of the routes, and the criteria based on which local bodies, together with the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, have selected such routes. The contents of the portal, with some rare exceptions, are still rather sketchy and most of them still need to be 'built' and communicated.

In the process of creating such a network, it becomes essential to know how to interpret the current or potential values and meanings, the expression of the growth of a civilisation, "using every fragment of the visible and every written or oral memory to give substance to what the material contains only potentially"[4]. We need to hone the ability to grasp and identify relationships that are still alive, and turn them into a story, or invent new ones, reconnecting a context network where the relationships established between the parties are more significant than a catalogue or a list of the parties themselves. We need to rediscover and then be able to restore the diachronic nature of a land, the intertwining of practices and collective representations, the evidence of social stratification (Olmo 2010: XVII).

We need to be able to recognise, and avoid, the ambiguities and risks inherent in the mass tourism industry, as well as their detrimental impact on the protection of cultural heritage, identifying and putting into practice the most suitable ways and tools for revit-

alisation without contradicting the principles of active protection, or distorting the nature of the places and communities that inhabit them.

For the development of the extensive project of *Cammini d'Italia* – an opportunity to regenerate and enhance the local cultural heritage – the experience of the pilgrimages to the tomb of St. James the Apostle, "an interior legacy, permanently fixed in western cultural and spiritual heritage by a thousand years of uninterrupted, authentic, suffered pilgrimage made by millions of people"[5], may suggest a paradigmatic change of perspective.

Cultural industry and consumption. Learning from Santiago, the first 'cultural itinerary in Europe'

In recent decades, we have seen the flourishing of the cultural tourism industry, linked to a new leisure society. With it, we have seen the gradual expansion of the type of objects that are now considered as heritage, involving buildings that are increasingly recent and diversified. This heritage expansion process, which some compare to the 'Noah complex' (Choay 1992), brings with it some ambiguity, which hampers the preservation of the cultural heritage that we intend to pass on to future generations.

Back in 1947, Horkheimer and Adorno used the definition of 'cultural tourism' to denounce the process of downgrading culture to consumer goods, an expression of the ambiguous complexity of the capitalist mindset that has caused – in their opinion – fetishism and a reduction in the critical capacity of culture itself, by making it easily available to anyone for the mere purpose of amusement and pleasure ('Amusement, leisure, easy listening') (Horkheimer, Adorno 1947).

The transformation of the 'historical monument' into an economic product, sometimes using the 'world heritage' label, has therefore led to a significant increase in tourist pressure, which in the long term has become unsustainable for the survival of these places, which have been degraded, damaged and exposed to anthropogenic risks, among others. The marketing of monuments and cultural sites can therefore contrast conservation and enhancement, two words that are more and more often united but not necessarily convergent or complementary. Similarly, phenomena like 'gentrification' or 'merchandising' can distort the places themselves, causing changes in social and economic conditions, which are reflected in their conservation and future transformation.

Even within international entities, there is no shortage of experiences and reflections aimed at defining the problems linked to cultural tourism, assessing their impact on sites and social groups, organising operational models, and providing examples of good practice (UNESCO 1982).

There is also much to learn from the thousand-year history of the Camino de Santiago (Vásquez de Parga, Lacarra, Uría Ríu 1948-49; Santiago de Compostela 1985) and from the actions following the impulse provided by the Council of Europe in 1987 to guide public authorities, institutions and local communities to strengthen, promote and enhance the first cultural itinerary in Europe, identifying a coordinated action plan[6].

Today as in the past, people walk the Camino de Santiago for a variety of reasons, devotional and others as well, in search of a spatial and temporal dimension unlike any other slow, conscious and sustainable cultural tourism experience. The uniqueness of this journey, which has continued uninterrupted for ten centuries, leads us to look at the word 'consumption' not only as a loss of testimonial values and material goods, exploited and

damaged by mass tourism, but also as a condition that is inextricably linked to the stratification of history, to the value of memory.

When the tomb of James the Apostle was discovered at the western end of the world more than a thousand years ago, a devotional phenomenon began which greatly affected the formation of Western civilisation and perhaps European knowledge as well; this space has been able to build a collective memory through a network of paths and routes that go beyond distances, borders and language barriers. From the 11th to the 21st century, the history of the Camino embodied a submerged tradition that is still strongly rooted in Western European culture. "In the late 11th century, the pilgrimage to Santiago started to be documented in all Christian countries, together with its impact on the customs, art and the spiritual life of these countries; it is a peculiar presence that will be reflected, with a specific and recognisable language, in the foundation of churches, hospitals, confraternities, in the drafting of guides, in

FIG. 1. The stairs to the relics of the Apostle Saint James (Cathedral of Santiago), consumed by the descending pilgrims' step.

travel literature, in painting, sculpture, music, in the spread of traditions and legends that are typically linked to St. James"[7].

The worn pavements and steps leading to the relics of the Apostle, furrowed by the walk of pilgrims for a thousand years, are an indelible mark of time (Fig. 1); time is history and history is memory (Le Goff 1977).

Physical space and sacred time, stratification of collective memory

Passing through ten centuries of history, the value, the meaning and the emblem of the Camino de Santiago transcend physical space and its material form, the changes or the significant transformations that occurred in the network of routes as well as in the neighbouring countries – now very different from the Romanesque period – over the centuries. Indeed, it is the destination of the pilgrimage that motivated the construction of the Camino; it is the ultimate goal (the veneration of the Apostle's grave) that gives Camino a spiritual dimension, beyond time. The departure, with its ritual detachment from everyday life, leads the pilgrim into a sacred space and time characterised by new rhythms, steps, needs, knowledge and experience. By definition, a pilgrim is someone who does not belong to the lands that they cross. It is this sense of alienation that creates a strong sense of identity in those who travel the same road and share the same destiny. They become part of a supranational society, eradicated from the land of origin but linked by similarities, identifying marks, common interests and needs. The construction of a collective memory was also founded on this balance of immaterial and material values, which has allowed the Santiago pilgrimage to be recognised as the ultimate Camino, capable of bringing

FIG. 2. Historical map of pilgrims' routes (Caucci Von Saucken 1989).
FIG. 3. Signs and brand along the path: the giant shell.

PEREGRINATIO AD LIMINA S. JACOBI
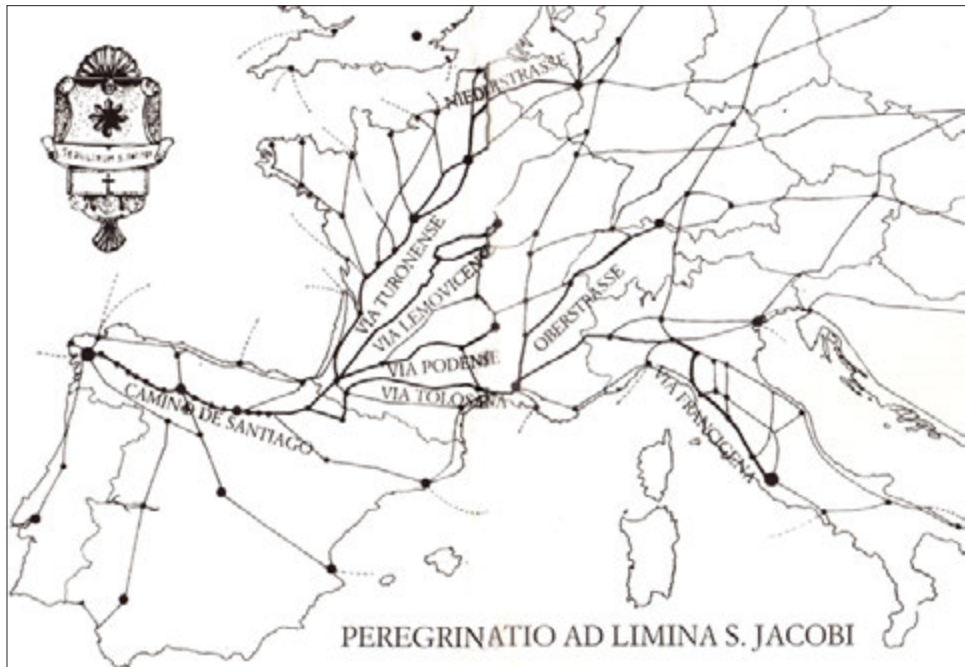
together and uniting the lives of entire communities. The values perceivable during the Camino have remained almost unaltered during the thousand years of pilgrimage in Santiago de Compostela, "as evidenced by the travel stories that, despite the centuries that separate them, reveal the same feelings, the same emotions, the same behaviours"[8].

Space is established and built around the idea of pilgrimage, and not vice versa: on a road network that, from the Romanesque period onwards, has changed due to political situations and the danger of its paths (in physical and social terms), with the construction of countless buildings for worship and hospitality, churches, chapels, hospitals, confraternities, which we see as an expression of a common, 'European' language. Starting from those Roman routes, the paths have changed; they do not stay the same over time in contrast to the ideas, the values and feelings of pilgrims. As the Camino de Santiago is consolidated in the collective mem-

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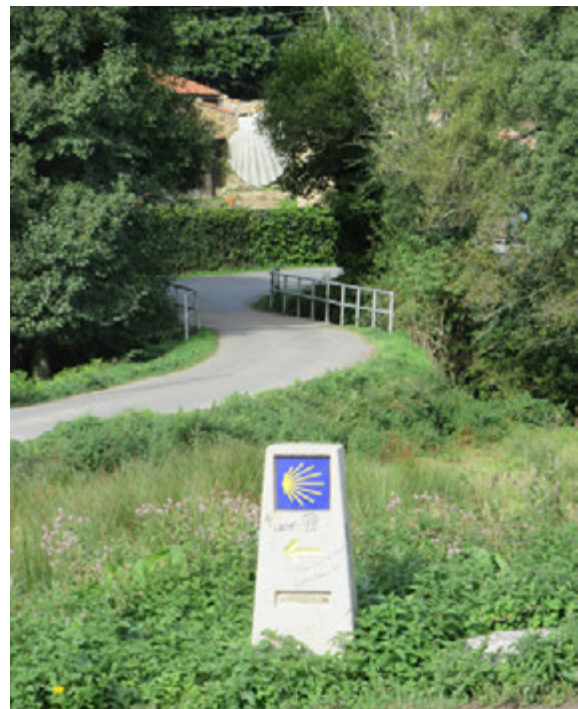
ory over time, the number of paths increases, they diversify, they vary, they branch out into smaller networks, they split into alternative ways[9] (Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 12). The conviction of belonging to a bigger homeland is reinforced along the routes, based on the ethical and social values of Christianity (charity, solidarity, sharing), on the formation of a specific culture – that is the European culture – a culture that was born, grown and learned along the Way of St. James (Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 65) (Fig. 2).

The collective memory is structured and consolidated not only along the paths and the buildings that dot them, but also and above all around symbols, legends and traditions: the scallop shell (the ultimate sign of the pilgrimage, the *testimonium* that certifies the completion of the pilgrimage and, at the same time, a welcoming symbol), the saddlebag, the staff. They also help to reinforce the meaning and value of the journey, even now that their use is hugely emphasised[10] (Fig. 3).

From the concept of Heritage to the Local Capital. The role of local communities in participatory processes

The pilgrimage towards Santiago, the network of paths that now makes it available to an impressive number of pilgrims or tourists, the many landscapes covered but also the organisation of local communities and the associations that stemmed from the walk, lead to further reflection that could be useful for the future development of the *Cammini d'Italia* network. In the relations between the pilgrims walking to St. James' tomb and the community that hosts them along their long journey or, dealing with current events, in the role of the local communities that live around and for the pilgrimage to Santiago, we can find another key factor, not only for economic growth, but also and above all for social and cultural development.

First of all, our focus shifts from cultural heritage to the concept of Local Capital, as a set of material and immaterial elements available to a local area, which represent its richness and the specific features to be enhanced.

The list of factors that define a Local Capital drawn up by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development includes non-economic interdependence, conventions, traditions, the informal rules that allow local players to work together, the associations and the solidarity networks that can work together to develop and support new ideas (OECD 2001).

These provide the basis for sustainable local development, which can certainly be based on the recognition of cultural heritage as a resource, but which also requires active community participation and cannot rely solely on the fact that places are accessible to external users (De Varine 2002; Council of Europe 2005). Albeit responsible and sustainable, tourism is one of the variables of local development, but not necessarily the most important.

Local communities can therefore have a key role in the process of regenerating the physical and social fabric, especially in urban and non-urban spaces used by everyone and located in prestigious cultural historical contexts; public authorities alone are not always able to enhance and revitalise these common public goods, nor to satisfy the needs of the local inhabitants.

In spaces like this, thanks to their historical and cultural value, the significance of community can play an essential role in terms of regeneration. We need to develop and implement revitalisation strategies that actively involve local inhabitants as well (resi-

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FIG. 4. Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934). *Texture of the Nervous System of Man and the Vertebrates*, 1898 (by <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cajal_actx_inter.jpg> accessed 21 June 2019). "The most effective way to think of a context is to compare it to the mind. Just as in the brain an unbelievable number of neurons and synapses that connect them controls bodily, emotional and intellectual functions, so in every context cultivations, buildings, objects, people and relationships between them are equally innumerable, and it is this incalculable density of achievements, information and processing to characterise a landscape" (Carandini 2017: 79).
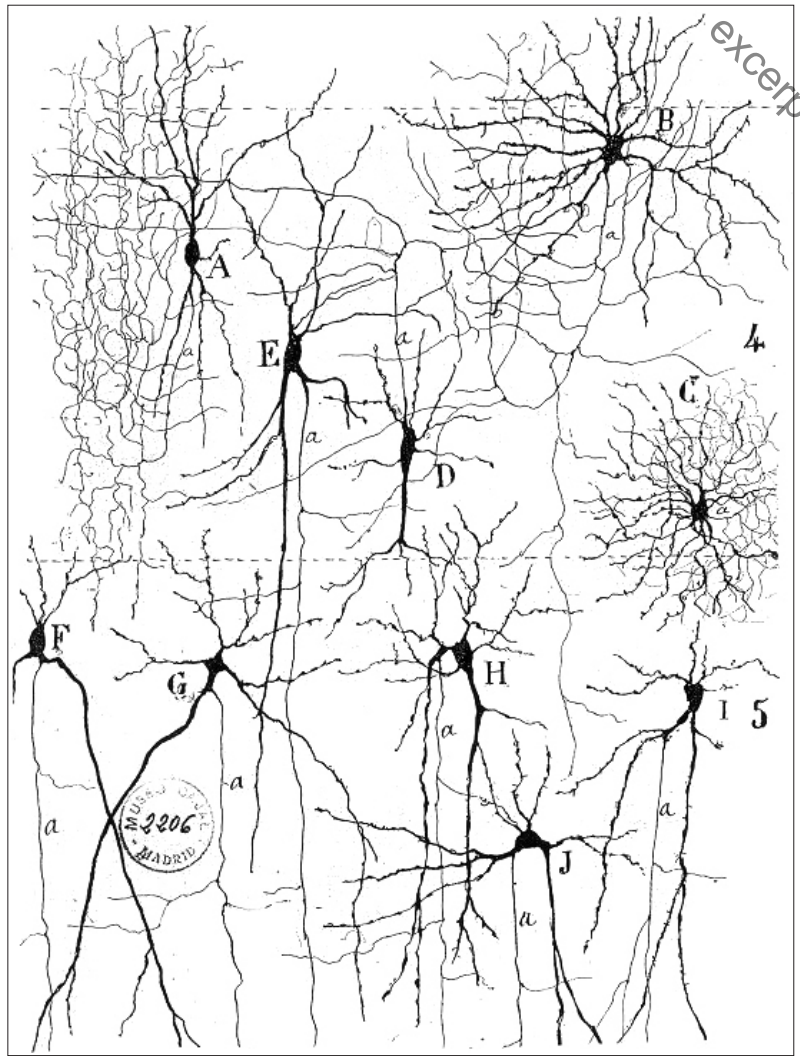
dents, city users, tourists) so that, as consumers, they return to lead the construction of the 'meaning' of that place. The possibility of establishing a Heritage Community introduces a change of perspective in the management of the built environment through the recognition of individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage, with the opportunity to create socio-economic value in a perspective of tourism enhancement as well.

The strategies, methods and tools we need to implement to create and 'launch' the Italian routes that are not yet well-known should aim at a full recovery, a collective use and understanding of the areas covered, including through the active participation of local inhabitants and the enhancement of local businesses, creating opportunities for social and economic development, also in the form of a social enterprise (Magnaghi 2010). Perhaps this will make it possible to overcome the contrast between conservation and enhancement, relying again on local communities, as was done in the past, for the care, the management, the implementation of safety measures and the improvement of public use over time (Fig. 4).

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Notes

1 Rome, November 4, 2017, Press Office of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism. Translation by the author.

2 Carandini 2017: 144. Translation by the author.

3 At the moment, this is the information available on the portal for most of the identified routes and the criteria based on which the Local authorities, in agreement with the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, have selected such routes.

4 Carandini 2017: 145. Translation by the author.

5 Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 25. Translation by the author.

6 The impulse to undertake the Camino has been triggered consistently with a framework of actions such as: a system to signpost the key points along the route, using the scallop shell symbol; a coordinated project to recover the natural and artistic heritage nearby; cultural activity programmes to enhance the historical, literary, musical and artistic heritage created by pilgrimages to Santiago; cultural exchanges between cities and regions located along the routes of the Camino.

7 Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 10-11. Translation by the author.

8 Caucci Von Saucken 1989: 40. Translation by the author.

9 Creating a safe and secure itinerary became a priority for the organisers of pilgrimages on the Way of St. James It was necessary to cross the whole territory beyond the Pyrenees, to face all kinds of risks, to travel along an area bordering the Muslim world, often unsafe and in some parts inhabited by hostile, inhospitable populations, as noted by the Guide.

10 The reference is to the giant shell found along the way and used as a landmark, questionable if taken out of context, but understandable in the spirit of the Camino.

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