

MEDIA HERITAGIZATION OF FOOD*

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ABSTRACT

BY CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON COOKERY PROGRAMS IN THE ITALIAN TELEVISION ARCHIVES, THIS PAPER EXPLORES BOTH THE HISTORIC AND PRESENT-DAY TELEVISION DEPICTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY AND 'TRADITIONS'. THE ARTICLE SITUATES THIS ANALYSIS IN A BROADER THEORETICAL REFLECTION ON FOOD HERITAGIZATION AND COMMUNICATION, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REDEFINITION OF LANDSCAPES AND CULTURES AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL PATRIMONIES. IN FOOD HERITAGE PROGRAMS, SPECIFIC STYLES OF FILMING, EDITING AND TEXT PRODUCTION DEFINE A CLEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GASTRONOMIC 'TRADITIONS' AND THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE. THE PROGRAMS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY AN EXTREME 'FOLKLORISATION' OF ITS SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL CONTEXT. SINGING AND DANCING, TALES AND STORIES OF ANCIENT TIMES, AND A NUMBER OF TACIT IMPLICATIONS ABOUT FOOD AS SIMPLE AND GENUINE, ALL POINT TO AN EVIDENT COMMUNICATIVE PROJECT, INVOLVING HOMESICKNESS, GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY, HISTORY AND PURITY. FOOD IS THUS MADE NOBLE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME ALIENATED VIS-À-VIS CHANGING EVERYDAY LIFE STANDARDS.

KEYWORDS

HERITAGIZATION, FOOD HERITAGE, COMMUNICATION, LANDSCAPES, RURALITY

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to establish a comparative critique of food patrimonialization and conservation. We employ here a distinction between the commonly used 'heritagization' and the expression 'patrimoni-

alization', which is scarcely used in the English language scholarship. In fact, 'heritagisation' in English is used as a practical translation of 'patrimonialisation' in French and viceversa.¹ However, we believe this distinction is useful and necessary as per our discussions within the framework of the PATRIRUR

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¹ See the discussion group and research network <<http://respatrimoni.wordpress.com>>.

research team at Barcelona University in June 2013. The notion of patrimonialization in fact complements the current critiques of value-adding processes that invest cultural phenomena of a 'heritage status'. The notion of intangible cultural heritage is in fact itself rooted in communities and their own self-representations, as well as their own representation of their environment and landscape, as it contributes to 'the construction of identities and the production of locality' (Roigé and Frigolé 2011:10). Processes of participation and co-optation of such imaginaries are key to the success of "value-adding", but are which is often critiqued as 'heritagization' when such added value invests local products, intangibles, and material cultures with global interests, projecting them in a "global hierarchy of value" (Herzfeld 2004). 'Patrimony' is thus a concept emerging out of a European debate developed in Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal whereby the focus of research is how certain elements of cultural and natural resources are 'utilized and converted into heritage: this is what we call processes of patrimonialization' (Roigé and Frigolé 2011:11). It refers to collective practices of self-heritagization so to speak, in compliance with institutional and hegemonic imaginaries of intangible and tangible cultural heritage.

We take this reflection further by distinguishing between patrimonialization and heritagization, which are used as interchangeable concepts by Roigé and Frigolé.²

In the case of the patrimonialization of food, which we analyse here, the difference between the two notions lies in the processes of value-addition of local food products. Such processes include institutional promotion (such as geographical denominations and quality certification), but also the collective practices of representation that place food at the center of a shared imaginary of local identities—as in the case of traditional products such as alpage cheese. Important agents of patrimonialization in this sense

are television programs, which have significant impact on consumption lifestyles and a shared imaginary of rurality. 'Patrimonialization' is used, here, for indicate the latter processes of property-marking and of value-adding by a variety of small, medium and large scale social and political actors, while 'heritagization' is considered as a more top-down process of valorization that prescribes the performance and staging of territories, communities and identities, exclusively played at a trans-local scale within global institutional frames (such as the EU and UNESCO).

The first section of the paper, based on Grasseni's work on alpine anthropology and the transformation of its dairy industry, introduces the notion of patrimonialization in relation to food cultures and the rural landscape in the Alps. Sustainable tourism, local food revivals, and the marketing of localities interpret and adapt the idea of "heritage" to entire localities: their foodscapes and landscapes. Local government and entrepreneurs consider the market itself is seen as a positive strategy to safeguard the environment, food traditions, and local crafts (Timothy and Boyd 2003). The following case study, based on Bindi's archive research with the Italian national broadcasting corporation, focuses on food imagery and the performance of culinary traditions on Italian television. Their mediatization invests food with a significant role within the framework of eco-consumerism and provides a recurrent trope that informs bottom-up discourse and representation. As such, it counts as an example of food patrimonialization rather than of heritagization.

Food 'heritagization' and the patrimonialization of food-related practices and knowledge has already been the focus of anthropological critique (Bendix and Hafstein 2009; Grasseni 2011). In this joint intervention, we aim to offer the outline of a comparative critique of food 'patrimonialization' across the realms of foodstuffs, natural conservation, intangible heritage and cultural conservation.³

² "By patrimonialization or heritagization we refer to those processes of cultural production by which cultural or natural elements are selected and reworked for new social uses" (Roigé and Frigolé 2011: 12).

³ We are grateful to the other PATRIRUR team research members for the engaging conversations held in Barcelona in June 2013 on this agenda. This article is part of our current engagement in the project Patrimonialization and redefinition of rurality. New uses of local heritage (2012-14), University of Barcelona.

In particular, we highlight how the patrimonialization of food cultures, food-related practices and culinary knowledge, and the dynamics of local distinction that underlie it, is compatible with a wider cultural project of identity essentialization through consumption and self-folklorization, within a national hegemonic agenda.

In what follows we develop reflections and examples drawn from mutual reflection on our long-term ethnographic engagements with the field of traditional dairy farming and cheese making (Grasseni) and televisual archives and culinary spectacularization (Bindi). Grasseni builds on an ongoing observation of one main field-site, Val Taleggio and of several minor field-sites in Lombardy, Italy, when she began participant observation in 1998 and continued monitoring the development of traditional animal husbandry and cheese-making over the following fifteen years. Bindi observed RAI audiovisual archives, after their digitalization from 1999 to 2004, looking at particular areas of these archives, searching by key-words: tradition, regional culture, superstition, rituals, popular devotion and so on. For the specific topic of food and food traditions, Bindi analyzes a group of TV programs, from the Sixties to the beginning of 2000's: as *La tv degli agricoltori* (since 1955), *Agricoltura domain* (in the Sixties), *A tavola alle 7* (since 1973), *A come agricoltura* (from the Sixties to the Eighties), *Linea Verde* (in the Eighties), *La prova del cuoco*, but also many extracts from the news of the same period in which food traditions were outlined in insights on local culture.

A “patrimonialization” framework allows us to better understand the many nuances of what is otherwise called “heritagization” because it unveils the multiplicity of agents involved and in particular the processes of property-marking and of value-adding that accompany it. Firstly the word “heritage” tends to obscure that these are economic processes and focusses rather on their political and normative results. Secondly, patrimonialization may express bottom-up processes that co-opt and interpret hegemonic discourses about rurality and distinction. Instead of the straightforward result of top-down heritagization, in our case study the media expo-

sure of (national) culinary traditions brings into relief the creeping appropriation in popular imaginary and commonsensical discourse of hegemonic stances towards tacit and local knowledge, at the hands of national media productions. Granted that commodification is the conversion of food values into monetary food exchanges, the accompanying translation of food cultures and crafts, recipes, and knowledge into recognizable and codified assets is functional to patrimonialization. Consistently with neoliberal accountabilities and audit cultures (Büscher et al. 2012), adding or increasing the market value of specific foodstuffs means producing detailed documentation and classification of the products involved (Bérard and Marchenay 1995; Ballacchino and Broccolini 2009). Such documentation includes for instance the definition of the geographical areas that are characterized by such local productions, but also the production of plentiful televisual materials that focus on customs, costumes, and traditional festivities during which special foodstuffs are consumed. Richard Wilk has shown how “global structures of common difference” are applied to national culinary knowledge in trans-local scenarios (Wilk 1995), following patterns of social distinction that are compatible with the dynamics of globalization and of a “global hierarchy of value” (Herzfeld 2004).

Similarly, an ethnographic understanding of the changing practices of alpine cheese-making is obscured in the normative discourse about the alpine landscape and its food cultures as ‘intangible cultural heritage’ (*patrimonio culturale immateriale*) that sits in certain places and belongs to specific communities. The development of eco-museums in alpine localities is a symptom of how the language of heritage is appropriated by local communities and used for purposes of local development, thus ‘patrimonializing’ one’s landscape and food cultures.

PATRIMONIALIZATION AND THE RURAL IDYLL

The European Convention on the Landscape (2000) defines it as an indistinguishable unit – a landscape imbricated with the anthropic practices

that inhabit the territory and their cultural representations and perceptions. And rightly so: for example, throughout northern Italy, from Lombardy to Trentino, *malghe* is the word for mountain pastures devoted to the *alpage* (*alpeggio*, or summer grazing season). The custom of taking livestock on the upper reaches of mountain pastures for the summer season is universal and includes an element of transhumance which was sometimes extended to year-long pastoralism, grazing grass from mountain passes to winter lowlands. *Alpe* means therefore “pasture”, while *Malga* is the actual grazing station, with an abode for the herder and most importantly, a space for making and maturing cheese. The customs and legal formats according to which pasture land was owned and conducted, and cheese made and shared, has profoundly shaped local and regional economies, architectures, landscapes, and histories. For instance, in “romance” alpine valleys pastures were predominantly held as commons (Kezich 2003). Indivisible community possessions, their use would be granted to members of the community only. During the 90 to 120 days of high-pasture grazing, herds productivity and cheese value is estimated at plus 30% of the winter production (considering also the savings on stored fodder and hay, plus often the increased capacity to store high-pasture hay on site for middle seasons). Such seasonal abundance meant that summer grazers would often be paid by lowland farmers to take their own cattle uphill too, while vice-versa individual grazing pastures would be allocated at auction at competitive prices, by the municipalities (Kezich 2003).

That the landscape is diversely inscribed by meaning-making practices was acknowledged by the UNESCO Conference of 2003, which approved the *Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage*. In Italy, this was ratified in 2007; in 2008 the national “Code on cultural and landscape wealth” introduced an article on the “Expression of collective cultural identity”, (*Espressioni di identità culturale collettiva*), referring among else to the UNESCO convention on the diversity of cultural expressions (2001). These normative documents acknowledge that space is a locus

of social memory. Landscapes can thus be regarded as repositories of skilled practices (and themselves as “skilled landscapes”: high-altitude irrigation techniques, terraced slopes, landscaped torrents allowing for deep-hole fishing, accurately named pastures and meadows, meticulously marked borders and crossings, leaf-raked woods and coveted corners left to wild mushrooms and berries, labor-intensive sleigh-logging and manual manure-spreading, three-day long fire-tending to make wood charcoal or limestone... most of these practices are lost or only preserved for tourist demonstrations (Grasseni 2004). Nevertheless, their ecological complexity granted the Alps the statute of a veritable social and material morphogenetic field of cultural diversity, through the lenses of which we can maintain the capacity of a fine-grained understanding of distinct languages, histories, and technologies.

Already in the early 1950s, Marcel Maget was documenting the tradition of making annual bread in an upland community of the Oisans, Villard d’Arêne (Maget 1989). Pre-dating the introduction of the potato, the 5-kilo rye loafs (*pain boulli*) survived its actual necessity, as rye is no longer cultivated at 1,650 meters altitude. Maget recorded that rye was being imported for the ritual bread-making only, and analyzed the wake of St. Martin’s as a unit of time, place and action that subsumes the community in this ritual. Having observed the rite over a continuous period between 1946 and 1970, Maget already records the encroachment of tourist economies in his survival anthropology project.

Nowadays, the “consumption of place”, which Urry denounced with reference to global tourism, is regularly applicable to the marketing of alpine localities (Urry 1995). While this has sometimes introduced some infrastructural ameliorations, for instance in the form of increased accessibility by road or cableway of high-mountain stations, this has hardly had a positive return on cultural and natural diversity. For example, regarding the maintenance of high-altitude woods and pastures, a number of interventions in Lombardy have made most of the municipal pastures reachable by car or tractor. However, this has effectively transformed the upper pastures in the equivalent of village meadows, with

the possibility of having day laborers making hay to be taken down to the village for winter storage by tractor. This means that much shorter permanence on the upper pastures is actually necessary. If Grasseni's informants used to spend most of their Falls on the lower *alpage* stations to "eat the hay" that had been stored on site during the summer until about the year 2000, now no one actually spends more than the prescribed for dairy production (84 days) on the upper reaches of the pastures, when the rest of the time can be safely spent in the village. While this makes life and labor allocation easier, it also means a more distracted keeping of the woods, of the alpine paths and roads, and a less extended tending of the cows on the mountain slopes.

To a less labor-intensive, embedded practice of animal husbandry corresponds instead an enhanced tendency to render traditional cheese-making practices more cosmetically pleasing, and more suited to become part of a performance of locality that includes traditional dairy practices as well as culinary celebration as part of a tourist package that can be sold, for instance, in mountain ecomuseums. For example, over the last five years upland Lombardy has seen the development of several ecomuseums, one of which established in one of the authors' previous fieldwork site, Val Taleggio (Grasseni 2009). The highlight of Val Taleggio's Ecomuseum stand at the Slow Food Salon of Taste (Salone del Gusto Slow Food) in Turin in 2010 was the presentation of its new interactive crash-courses in cheese-making, whereby tourist can in a few hours be told about dairy farming, cheese-refining, and make their own miniature *taleggio* cheese. The interactive installation consists of wearing headphones and listening to professional actors while being shown a number of still photographs and filmed footage about animal husbandry in the valley, featuring the local farmers. The performance is complete with the hands-on experience of visiting a restored cowshed, sniffing hay, straw, and cow dung,

and being told about the importance of mold on cheese. This "theatrical degustation" (*degustazione teatralizzata*) is one of the capstones of the Ecomuseum's tourist offers, entitled "cheese-maker for a day" (*casari per un giorno*).⁴

In the following section, we will highlight how none of these dramatic transitions is depicted or analyzed in the media representation of food heritage in Italy. On the contrary, television programs and web imagery reproduce a standardized image of the rural, which became established historically as part of a rhetoric of national identity. Before presenting this case study, though, we wish to highlight how nature, custom, and ethnic identity are elaborated and repositioned to create this standard imagery within patrimonialisation processes.

Firstly, the alpine nature becomes a rural idyll. According to Büscher et al. (2012:16-21), "appropriation and misrepresentation" are among the marks of neoliberal biodiversity conversation. We argue that their analysis of the spectacularization of the landscape also pertains to the patrimonialization of food communities and territories. In other words, the trope of the rural idyll is an equally powerful discourse of mystification as that of nature bounty, as both are inherently disposed towards "growth" and "development". While Büscher et al. (2012) focus on demystifying the "sustainability" mission behind coercive practices of natural conservation, we stress how both metaphors (the rural idyll and nature's bounty) are used in the patrimonialization of food, as foodscapes always include the landscape and the communities that inhabit them, with their skilled practices. The rural idyll and nature's bounty are recurrent tropes in the imagery that literally 'packages' mountain cheese, especially in its latest phase of increased competition between different geographical indications and even between different certifying agencies.⁵ For example, thumbing through any catalogue of Slow Food presidia means contemplating professional photographs of

⁴ See the website of the ecomuseum <<http://www.ecomuseovaltaleggio.it/>> and of the professional association that has curated the interactive package under the name of "sustainable theatre", Koine <<http://www.database.it/koine/koine.htm>>.

⁵ See Grasseni (2012) on the open competition between a Slow Food presidium and a consortium for Protected Designation of Origin who produce different version of Bitto cheese in the north of Lombardy.

landscapes and close-ups, transhumant sheep herds and bountiful fishing nets, clean hands picking ripe tomatoes and carefully placing them in wooden baskets, hand-sorting beans or hand-made string cheese and rope-hanging *provoloni*. None of these images acknowledge the pressure for quantity and packaging that every small holder feels, even if protected by a Slow Food circle of discerning customers. Secondly, the ‘heritagization’ of culinary traditions and customs happens within the framework of a more ample patrimonialization of rural lifestyles, or custom (Vaccaro and Beltran 2009; Bendix and Hafstein 2009). Custom is better understood as a common, which is inalienable and intrinsically dynamic (Weiner 1992). But custom viewed as national, or regional, or local “patrimony” differs from a common and becomes formulaic, Cheese-making craft, understood as a common, would not have exchange value: similarly in the case of items of world heritage, rarely are artistic, historical, architectural, archeological, environmental, natural, or cultural “goods” sold for money. Nevertheless, the association of food with specific aspects, sites or practices of tangible or intangible heritage increases its value as a commodity. Such association can be established through commercial labelling, such as geographic denominations, or through new institutions that claim authority over intangible cultural heritage (crafts, skills, tacit knowledge). Political authority and institutional claims are hence also implicated in the relationships of the market (Strasser 2003). In other words, the new association of foodstuffs with the idea of *heritage* makes all associated knowledge and practices valuable and replicable. Various authors have focused on the social construction of heritage-value, through specific “circuits of re-signification” (Wilk 1997).

Thirdly, patrimonialisation is an identity discourse. Jean and John Comaroff in particular argue that commodification and corporatization reinforce each other, with reference to the construction of ethnic identity in South Africa (2009). They make the case that biogeographical indigenous knowledge can be commoditized only once a group can claim property of it. Vice-versa, interest groups and actual corporations emerge around the agenda of

exploiting the market value of indigenous botany, folklore, traditional healing practices, etc. In other words, the Comaroffs insist on the co-production of commodification and the reification of an ethnic group. What is mobilized in these cases is the notion of cultural property rather than that of cultural patrimony –but in both cases a common, namely a resource that is collectively reproduced and used, becomes owned (biogeographical knowledge in one case and culinary practice in the other). This is relevant to how essentialized representations of collective practices as an expression of ethnic identity are congenial to patrimonialization processes. In the light of the Comaroffs’ argument, for example, we can revisit the work of Pierpaolo Viazzo, Stuart Woolf, Mariangela Bodo and Michele Musso on traditional cheese-making in the Alps.

After a team investigation of the historical transformation of dairy production in the Lys Valley, they argue how the traditionally reified distinction of Val d’Aoste into two areas, one producing for the market and one for homesteading, is simplistic and cannot be predicated upon an existing ethnic boundary between *romance* and *walser* populations. The received wisdom has it that *romance* populations would organize their pastures so that they can be conducted à *grande montagne*, namely collectively, with cooperative cheese-making of big, well matured fat wheels of *fontina* for the export market. Viceversa, *Walser* custom would keep the *alpage* for self-reliance and homesteading, skimming the milk to make butter to sell, and keeping slim milk for making small, low-value *tome*. Hence their pasture conduction would be family-based on individual portions of the pasture, namely à *petite montagne*. Historical analysis demonstrates a high degree of fluidity and complexity, so that the choice of producing for *tome* rather than for *fontina*, results as never over-determined, neither by language or ethnic custom, nor by geographical area or pasture quality. It was in fact the emergence of wider markets for *fontina*, induced by precocious tourist economies, that induced a self-reorganization of pasture economies with rapid transitions preceded by long stagnations (Viazzo and Woolf 2002).

What Viazzo's historical research demonstrates is that, despite commonsensical assumptions, the variety of cheese-making customs and practices are not an expression of ethnic identity, nor of environmental determinism. It is an important example of how the Comaroff's argument can be reversed: commodification and essentialism are not only contemporary processes but can also be found in historical assumptions about ethnic diversity in the Alps. Their alleged expression in different practices of material culture, such as cheese-making, are the result of hegemonic and often condescending representations.

This representational dynamic is notably that of center-periphery: as the following case study will show, over the last decades it is the national television corporation, based in the capital city, that produces and reinforces biased accounts of its marginal valleys and peasantry. The trope of the rural idyll is effected stylistically through specific visualized and virtualized formats, in which food, landscape, and rural communities are kept frozen in time.

What our two field and archive research experiences show combined, is that this hegemonic view of the periphery from the metropolitan center is now readily accepted and appropriated by the rural margins of the nation, in the name of a food heritage that can be sold, either in the form of gourmet cheese or under the guise of tourist visits to picturesque alpine localities that incorporate culinary heritage. This in our view amounts to a patrimonialization of alpine food cultures.

IMAGINED FOOD - BETWEEN TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA

The case study we propose is based on Letizia Bindi's analysis of the RAI (Italian Radio Television) audiovisual archives (Bindi 2004, 2005, 2012), focusing on the different stages and media styles through which food and conviviality are represented and conceptualized for virtual consumption. The basic tenet of this study is that in Italy, the media have strongly influenced the processes of 'heritagization', reification and 'spectacularization' of food traditions and practices introduced in the previous section. In the RAI archive it is possi-

ble to follow a continuous series of programs centered around food from their origins in the Sixties through to their contemporary evolution. This constant stream of broadcasts, their daily reviews and the Sunday transmissions allow to extrapolate three main reflections:

- a. the growing weight of food in conversation as in journalism, and the significance of this item in elaborating a system of 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1983) in modern and contemporary society;
- b. the co-production of folklore and locality: this is a visual rhetoric of the landscape that is of particular interest for its specificity within many possible heritagization processes and agendas;
- c. the successful dissemination of food discourse onto cable television and new media—an explosion which has super-exposed the topic, especially in relation to institutional and international processes such as the Nomination of the Mediterranean Diet for UNESCO recognition and the preparation of the 2015 International Expo in Milan (devoted to "Feeding the Planet").

Critical cultural studies have exposed media influence in the construction of national identities (Hall 1980, 1981; Monteleone 1992; Abruzzese, 1995, 1999; Anderson 1996; Weiner 1997), but also and more specifically the celebration of regional peculiarities (Sedda 2004; Bindi 2005). Italian public television, first of all, consciously used specific styles of production to convey a sense of cultural belonging and identity through images and discourses of food Italian traditions. Some invariants in these specific broadcast formats about food include texts, anchormen, locations, editing, and communication styles.

In the Sixties Sunday food programs during the lunch slot became customary. They are encased in series about rural culture that reproduce the cliché of the countryside seen as cultural periphery, a hegemonic representation issuing from the capital city (cf. Hannerz 2001). A bonding cultural inter-

vention on national identity is however the explicit mission of a national broadcasting enterprise, and the representation of rurality from the viewpoint of a self-perceived industrial and metropolitan culture was deployed consistently since World War II and throughout the reconstruction of Italy (De Rita 1962; Abruzzese 1995; Crapis 2002).

Among the salient aspects of this representational device we find the transformation of food from an ancillary topic to a keystone icon of cultural heritage for local, regional and regional communities, not insignificantly achieved through a consistent representational style. Food becomes, in fact, the very center of the TV scene in programs increasingly dedicated to presentation and promotion of specific communities and landscapes. Food traditions are isolated, defined, narrated on television as a part of process of valorization and promotion of typical products and ancient culinary traditions. This transformation is effectively achieved also through the regionalization of both public and private television. Both entertainment and information, beginning from the Sixties, produced a veritable 'packaging' of local identities according to a standard televisual format. In this format, tradition and folklore provide a divulgative and picturesque representation of both landscapes and foodscapes. Food in particular is essentialised as a catalyst of identity traits that are obsessively at the centre of media communication. Primarily most of the TV shots are frontal, they prefer locations as squares or large village streets where banquets of local typical products are prepared with extreme accuracy, with a strong focus on ancient objects and customs. Generally one or more local witnesses are invited to speak in front of the camera: sometimes they are prominent local figures or renowned local or national chefs or good-looking local women who show different types of food, 'staged' to be narrated with anecdotes or legendary tales concerning the origin of specific products or recipes (this consistent scenography is testified as early as Lombardi Satriani 1973).

Coupled with this 'central scene' there are variants and digressions on the theme such as panoramic views of the surrounding countryside, collections of objects, ancient crafts, or face close-ups,

with special emphasis on portraits of elderly people and children (a practice now obsolete due to a recent ban on showing children's faces on television).

Over the last 20 years, popular TV program series such as *Linea Verde*, *La Domenica del Villaggio*, as well as specific programs on traditional food on the dedicated channel *Gambero Rosso*, added a novel and significant element to the previous format of audiovisual documentation of food. Groups of local musical and traditional dances became part and parcel of the rural scenery, appearing at a point, for example before or after interviews with notable interlocutors or following the exhibition of a lavish banquet laid out ready of its collective consumption. Music and folk performances in fact open or more frequently close the program, as the feast symbolically begins with the token participation of local residents and the program conductor. These folk groups generally performed ancient songs related to the agricultural calendar or to the production of particular food products, even if the choice was not always so philologically congruent. Folkloristic groups have become a fixture—an expected as much as generic background to the featured scene of a collective banquet at the dining table.

Finally, media food discourse has consistently been inseparable from the representation of rural communities. Rather than celebrating the advances of food technology, for instance, food and rurality is a systematic coupling of the media industry. Food is associated with farmers or chefs, never with industrial workers or laboratory technicians. In these television programs the commentaries focus recurrently on the categories of 'genuine, pristine, ancient' and even 'atavist, traditional, folkloristic' (*Gentes*, *La Domenica del Villaggio*, *Linea Verde*, *La prova del cuoco*—2000/2010; *Sapori d'Italia* on the satellite channel *Marco Polo* between 2008 and 2012; and specific programs of the food channel *Gambero Rosso* on traditional food in the same period). In these culinary programs, whether set "on location" or more recently in studio kitchen, the food performances offered are strictly traditional: whether in the countryside or imported in the studio, banquets, special recipes, accompanying rituals and costumes revolve around the

established authority of religious festivities or of the rural calendar.

The insistence on 'authenticity' is played out in relation to the category of 'antiquity': Appadurai stigmatized this relation speaking about the "production of locality" and of complex interlacing among value, market, sense of the "patina", and system of distinctions (Appadurai 1996; Bourdieu 1979). But the original association between food and the rural continues undeterred, as a prescribed format in Italian television. The urban revival of Grandmothers' culinary recipes, the insistence on "genuine" products and the authenticity of local products marked, since the Seventies, the beginning of food 'heritagization'. This included its progressive transformation into cultural heritage, and its inexorable spectacularization. In the Seventies, the true mark of local tradition is sought in folk dances and music (Lombardi Satriani 1966, 1973; 1974 a and b; Sedda 2004; Bindi 2005). "Folk" was represented, above all, by choreographed dances and songs, rituals and feasts (Hall 1981; Lombardi Satriani 1974b; Mazzacane 1985; Jesi 1977). Traditional food and rural practices became a typical backdrop for such 'folk scene'. So urban audiences re-learn, and at the same time objectify, reify and alienate their rural memory, transforming it in a mediatically shared 'cultural heritage', an object of spectacle. The accompanying food became an ideal product for a commodified 'folk-market'.

In the Eighties and the Nineties there are no relevant differences in the communicative styles if compared to the Seventies. We again find weekend transmissions located in the countryside where the focus on rural, typical, and genuine food was possibly stronger and tourist promotion was realized through an evident process of "staged authenticity" (MacCannell 1973). TV broadcasts were often solicited and promoted by local communities: they invite TV crews to their patron or traditional feasts. We could consider this the transition from a "mechanic identification between local dimension and folklore –very marked from Fifties to Eighties" to the "answer of communities as a cultural staging of their own diversity [1980/2000] which is still ongoing" (Faeta 2005:157). In the first period we had,

in fact, an exclusive top-down process of manipulation of local identities from the part of National television broadcasting, while in the second communities became more assertive and active in their promotion by soliciting directly media coverage.

In recent years more attention has been paid to new rural enterprises aiming at the recovery of lost products and flavours. This sometimes happens with the mediation of anthropologists and through audiovisual documentation. 'Food histories' are produced, feeding the transformation of local foods into cultural heritage and tourist attraction, not without ambivalences. These discourses and images promote an increasingly floating and fragmentary tourist market, trying to revitalize peripheral and marginal areas through the articulation of different dichotomies: rural/urban, genuine/manipulated, authentic/false, old/new, and traditional/innovative. These are all dichotomies that contribute to frame the complex bricolage of images that the media has produced on locality in recent years (Dei 2003; Vereni 2008).

Today a barer style of communication prevails, superseding the paternalism of the Seventies. Program commentators or voiceovers are rarely condescending toward the interviewees as before, when compassion and 'exotisation' prevailed in media narrations about peasant life and costumes. They privilege straightforward information instead: data, products, feasts and images coupled with editorial texts. Many local stakeholders, linked to small and middle agricultural enterprises and commerce are interviewed as well as institutional authorities. There are also renowned chefs 'reinterpreting' local recipes in the light of their superior skill. This new communicational style on food as cultural heritage shows a strong polarization of vision and a new hegemonic approach to locality. Thus, traditions and rural cultures increasingly become commodities and market niches for urban entertainment and tourism (Appadurai and Beckenridge 1999, 2000). Locality is tokenised, represented through excellent items that are taken to be representative of specific landscapes, spectacular feasts and traditional rituals. Local food is thus showcased in these contexts, making the 'consumption of place' possible and

being the conduit of their own commodification and spectacularization (Urry 1995).

Following the needs of the prevailing tourist market, food discourse and material cultures mix with other genres; they overflow digital platforms with food channels, while an increasing number of websites and online portals are dedicated to healthy food and traditional cooking, exalting the benefits and the appeal of the Mediterranean Diet, recently nominated on UNESCO's ICH List (Moro 2013). Similarly, broadcasts and websites proliferate around the Milan 2015 Expo "Feeding the Planet. Energy for life" with an enormous quantity of images, narrations, insights on correct nutrition and different food traditions: an increasing hegemonic discourse on ethno-national foods that is fuelled by multinational food supply chains.

This last frontier of 'virtual food' deserves particular attention because it shows new communication styles and new trends on food culture affirming themselves thanks to the greater movement of people, commodities and symbols. A twist of the food image as 'staging' and as performance is affirmed (for example in kitchen realities like Hell's Kitchen and Masterchef). A new idea of rurality, genuinity, typicality and authenticity is affirmed: by inviting to 'consume' places and of traditions, media realize their reification as cultural heritage (Bindi 2013). As in the television of the 'Italian economic boom' in the Sixties and Seventies, talking about ancient recipes and food traditional products implied a process of 'folklorisation' of the rural and a 'spectacularization' of food as an object 'good to communicate', by an alienating approach, an objectifying gaze synthesizing a wider solicitation of the senses for urban and grasping tastes, in the cannibalistic gesture of 'eating culture' (Clifford 1988).

CONCLUSION

The debate on 'heritagization' appeared largely as a critical response to the increasingly normative

adoption of the concept of heritage, for instance by international organizations such as UNESCO and especially in conjunction with UNESCO's campaign for the preservation of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2003).⁶ Notably, ICH has substituted the normative use of "cultural property" in international diplomacy: both the *Cairo Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Property* (2004), and the *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954) do not refer to heritage but to "property" of cultural goods.⁷ In these latest UNESCO documents, "heritage" is translated as "patrimony" as per its meaning in French, Italian, Catalan and Spanish among other Latin languages ('patrimoine', 'patrimonio', or 'patrimoni': Bessi re and Tib re 2010). In our theoretical discussion in section 1, we have stressed how patrimony has a different connotation than heritage. Though both "heritage" and "patrimony" refer to something that is handed down from the past, the latter foregrounds its proprietorial nature: patrimony is something that is inherited and possessed. Hence, the "patrimonialization" of food entails not only its heritagization (food is heritage in as much as it is associated to specific cultures, landscapes, and practices) but its *commodification*.

As maintained by Beatriz Santamarina, "patrimony" is a naturalized category which is intrinsically political and generative of conflict, since it reifies and essentializes identity, authenticity and purity (2012). The issue of "owning culture" (Kaneff and King 2004) becomes particularly pertinent to food when food, as in the Italian case study proposed in the second section, becomes recurrently associated with processes of folklorization and hegemonic forms of cultural representation. Elsewhere, similar processes may lead to claims of "cultural property" by minority and indigenous populations (Myers 2004) or to the ethnification of local identity (Geschiere 2009).

In Italy, the politics of geographical indications for specific foodstuffs brings significant economic advantage and fuels conflicts of interests (Grasseni

⁶ <<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00001>>.

⁷ <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/egypt-cultural_property-160204.htm>. See for instance Bortolotto, 2009.

2012). For example, Bitto cheese is internationally renowned among gourmet circles, despite its minuscule production and very regional recipe, thanks to the celebrity of its “resistance” to the local PDO consortium. The Slow Food movement supported a small group of Bitto producers who claim precedence over the Protected Denomination of Origin of this alpine cheese, above the legally recognized consortium of Bitto cheese. In fact, in the name of a stricter and more authentic tradition, they operate outside of the consortium with commercial and media support from Slow Food. This case is telling of how patrimonialization creates unequal competition among different actors, and it depends on context, networks and serendipitous action which actors will be best placed to organize strategies for *value-adding* - whether big consortia under European law or small local productions backed up by activist associations.

The ‘patrimonialization’ of food in late modernity has growing importance for the ways in which rurality and the rural peripheries are represented in the national media. In Italy, local foods and styles of conviviality have been consistently narrated, represented and documented by TV broadcasts and documentaries. Their analysis reveals how the rural idyll is mythicized by a rhetoric of food identity, but also made available to tourism through patrimonialization. This recently accelerated process has been in the making for several decades, and has maintained a consistent style since World War II, despite the tumultuous changes intervened in the landscape, socio-economic fabric, and regional economies of rural Italy, particularly in the alpine regions and their dairy tradition. Virtual, mediated food has become a distinguishing feature of locality, a recognizable stylistic element standing for a mythicized community or place, congenially to dominant and normative discourse of cultural property and natural heritage.

A critical analysis of patrimonialization means finding examples of resistance and resilience to it (Del Marmol, Frigolé, Narotzky 2010). In the current feminist literature on “community” and “diverse” economies, geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson have suggested to use alternative conceptual tools to make economies of affect and

of reciprocity more visible and relevant to everyday cultural representation. Provisioning, providing care, homesteading, seasonal harvesting, and the everyday circuits of gifting, exchanging, and bartering are forms of everyday economy that become much more perspicuous if we consider the constant work of “commoning” that food providers and prepares (mostly women) profuse in everyday relationships. Within these “diverse economies”, kinship, solidarity and reciprocity are more relevant than monetary exchange and copyright (Gibson-Graham 2003, Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). However, these are completely silenced by the televisual representation of “heritage” foods, as the latter are by definition commodities for the market.

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