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# In Rural Villages and the Suburbs

Italian Experiences with Museums and Ecomuseums

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“There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of  
in your philosophy”  
(William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5)

## **Suburbs at the center: reflecting on the relationship between ICH and museums**

*Valentina Lapicciarella Zingari*

This reflection has been written during the COVID-19 pandemic, a peculiar context to re-think the challenges surrounding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) safeguarding and museums after several years of travels, meetings and real time spent together in the context of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museum Project* (IMP). As result of a collective discussion within the Italian NGO SIMBDEA<sup>1</sup>, we took the decision to propose for this publication two Italian case-studies involved in the IMP project, from two different ‘peripheral’ areas and angles.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand there is the case of Casa Lussu, a museum/artisan-workshop based in a little rural village in Sardinia, Armungia, at risk of depopulation. On the other hand there is the Ecomuseum Casilino, situated in a superdiverse neighbourhood in the suburbs of Rome.

IMP has been a real opportunity to reflect on the remarkable diversity of museum realities. In this process we took the stance at heart that often the core of a question becomes more visible from its margins, borders and boundaries. Peripheral spaces hence might also be able to function as observatories for reflection on our society and its transformations. Far from the centers of power, (urban) suburbs and (rural) villages – as evidenced by the historical

- 1 SIMBDEA, Italian Society for Museum and Heritage Anthropology, since 2010 is an accredited NGO for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and a partner of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museum Project*.
- 2 In the section ‘inspiration’ of the IMP website, the Casilino Ecomuseum is presented with the Co.Heritage project, <https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en/inspiration-2/detail-2/co-heritage-intercultural-ich-in-rome-suburbs> (01/09/2020).

relation between mountains and lowlands – are places and social spaces for alternative and creative solutions (between strategies and tactics of resistance<sup>3</sup>) to be tested.

We organised a reflection among the direct protagonists of these ongoing experiences in Armungia and Casilino, together with two representatives of the Italian academic community. Pietro Clemente and Alessandra Broccolini were involved with their research groups and students in a long-term dialogue with these two territories, organising fieldwork, research sessions, but also directly participating into the heritage-making process: animating debates, meetings and festivals. Claudio Gnessi and Tommaso Lussu embody the roles and voices of the ‘communities, groups and individuals’ (CGIs) as developed in the frame of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (and which offered food for ongoing reflection in its wake).<sup>4</sup> Claudio and Tommaso are, through their experience of developing cultural projects in the territory of their daily life, in different ways also the protagonists of a constructive dialogue with the scientific world. And from within open and interconnected ‘heritage communities’ both also engage from the local level in networking processes with regional, national and international policy frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

We argue that the dialogue between cultural bearers and brokers like Tommaso Lussu and Claudio Gnessi and the scientific community, here represented by Alessandra Broccolini and Pietro Clemente, can play a crucial role in processes of heritage-making.<sup>6</sup> We also consider that these human, intellectual and affective relations between social scientists and CGIs, can become a powerful factor of sustainable heritage-making processes, bearing a creative approach to ICH safeguarding.

What do we learn from the two following stories on the relation between the ancient word ‘museum’, crossing the contemporary discussions towards a new museum definition<sup>7</sup>, and the recent ICH paradigm that meets the sustainability challenges? We will reflect on these questions later on within this contribution, but let us first get you acquainted with both experiences:

3 The concept of ‘resistance strategies and tactics’ is used in reference to M. de Certeau *L’invention du quotidien I, Arts de faire*. Paris, 1990; M. de Certeau, *La culture au pluriel*. Paris, 1976.

4 You can find a trace of these reflections on CGIs for example in the contribution: M. Jacobs, ‘CGIs and intangible heritage communities’, in T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Bruges, 2020, p. 38-40.

5 Marc Jacobs reflects on engagement, also related to the Overall Result Framework of the 2003 Convention, in: M. Jacobs, ‘CGIs and intangible heritage communities, museums engaged’, in: T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Bruges, 2020, p. 41.

6 M. Jacobs, J. Neyrinck and A. Van der Zeijden, ‘UNESCO, Brokers and Critical Success (F)Actors in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage’, *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 251-252.

7 T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums*, p. 112.

## Armungia: two museums and many stories for the local cultural heritage

Pietro Clemente and Tommaso Lussu

Armungia is a small village in the south-east of the island Sardinia in Italy. It is a historical village of farmers and shepherds, for a long time *finis terrae*. Emilio Lussu (1890-1975), a figure of high profile in the history of Sardinia and Italy, was born there in 1890. During the First World War, Lussu was captain of the brigade Sassari, composed entirely of Sardinians. His experience of the war inspired him to write the novel *Un anno sull'altipiano - A Year on the Plateau*, translated worldwide. He founded the Sardinian Action Party with other veterans. As elected member of the Chamber of Deputies he was sent to political confinement by fascism. He escaped to France where he took part in the struggle for liberation. He afterwards became minister, senator of the Italian Social Party and later of the Social Proletarian Party. As a major figure of honesty and a brave politician, committed to the emancipation of the island Sardinia and, at the same time, of the Italian working class, his memory – together with a prehistoric *nuraghe* (a typical Sardinian dolmen) – differentiates Armungia from many neighbouring and equally isolated villages. In 1911, 1332 inhabitants lived in the village; today 473 nominal and far less residents. Here, in the 1980s, objects of work and life before modernization – especially by women – were brought together in a collection, upon the initiative of Emilio Lussu and his emancipated wife Joyce Salvadori (1912-1998).

*The 1980-2000: Collecting, remembering. Research and museums as long-term activators of a local heritage process*

Based on a collection created in the last quarter of the 20th century under impulse of the politician Emilio Lussu, and in particular his partner Joyce Salvadori, a museum was established in 2000. The museum was developed with the support of anthropologists of the University of Cagliari, in order to study the work and daily life in the territory and was named *Sa Domu de Is Ainas* (the house of tools).<sup>8</sup> From 1998 to 2000 Armungia hosted a course of anthropological research training by the Sapienza University of Rome, which yielded some publications. Later on, after a first permanent exhibition, the Emilio and Joyce Lussu Museum (2014/15) was established in a historic palace in the village centre.

At the end of the 1990s the road linking Armungia to the coast was built. Since then the village is no longer *finis terrae*, and offered more opportunities for services and for tourism. Nevertheless, the demographic decline, the attraction of the city and the coast, the persistence of marginal pastoralism and agriculture, the high index of old aged people, is combined with social

8 Museo storico "Emilio e Joyce Lussu", <http://www.armungiamusei.it/index> (01/09/2020).

disintegration, lack of jobs and of local development opportunities. These areas have been confronted with hydrogeological problems and serious seismic events.

These types of so-called ‘inner areas’ cover some 60% of the national territory. A recent policy tool addressing the challenges in these regions is the national Inner Areas Strategy (SNAI)<sup>9</sup>, supporting or accompanying the growing awareness and the organisation of bottom-up responses with the networking of small villages and various civil society movements, meeting the support of new research perspectives such as those interdisciplinary promoted by the book *Re-inhabiting Italy* (Antonio De Rossi (ed.), *Riabitare l’Italia*. Rome, 2018). This book points out the need to reverse the process of abandonment of the heart of the mountainous, hilly island and rural Italy.

*2010: Traditional weaving and revitalisation challenges. The birth of a local ICH dynamic involving museums*

The sketched overall picture highlights the Armungia experience. It is in this context that a nephew of Emilio, whose family had lived in Rome since the post-war period, at a certain moment chooses to re-inhabit Casa Lussu. He transforms the building of patrimonial value (visited by schools) into a building of historical value but for private use and hospitality – somewhere in between a B&B and a historic house. Here a traditional weaving activity starts taking place, as a means of cultural promotion for both craftsmanship and research. It can also be related and compared to diverse other revitalisation practices occurring in small centres in Sardinia, also through a festival. The new role of Casa Lussu seems to have influenced the social life of the village far more than other interventions of the past (museums, research internships, ...), and it seems also to have changed the marginality of the two museums and to have turned these into becoming attractive again.

In the case of the *Sa domu de is ainas* museum, traditional weaving activities, demonstrations, courses and training are provided today; while the Lussu Museum is enhanced by the presence on-site of one of the grandchildren of Emilio and Joyce Lussu, and by a network of references. This small turning point got launched in 2008 through the choice of Tommaso Lussu who, after having variously implemented his skills as a palethnologist in the Mediterranean, decided to return to Sardinia and to work in the field of nuragic archeology, while rehabilitating the family home which had been used only occasionally and for holidays during many years. He did this together with his partner Barbara Cardia, granddaughter of Giovanna Serri, the most experienced weaver of Armungia. Both decided to learn the tradition of handweaving from grandma Giovanna and to make it an activity practiced anew. ‘Casa Lussu rugs’ today have a Facebook page.

9 See note 10.

The rooted and innovative reference point in the village generated a small stream of cultural movements, but also of larger media representations for the local community, and the development of cultural tourism with visitors from the coasts. Various B&Bs started in Armungia, as well as a restaurant. Although the overall situation in the village still remains difficult today, and the local community is not always favourable to all of these innovations, we can say that small-scale museums, *nuraghe*, and tourism have been productive for a recovery in the village. The most recent statistics also indicate a slight improvement in the relationship of old/young inhabitants. Casa Lussu furthermore operates as a reference for a network of production and marketing of quality craftsmanship, which is based on a manual and non-mechanised production cycle and connects to the more recently emerging UNESCO 2003 intangible cultural heritage paradigm and to the “heritage community” perspectives provided by the 2005 Faro Convention. It also connects with the experiences of biodiversity and traditional food offerings in which the nearby San Nicolò Gerrei agricultural cooperative is the local protagonist.

*Casa Lussu: the heritage-making process for a sustainable future*

Casa Lussu is an interesting case of how re-habiting places with a significant cultural capital can open ways, fostering the different expressions of the cultural heritage of a community. This ‘return to the territory’ bringing living activities, also revitalised the museums that otherwise risked to become cathedrals in the desert.



Figure 1. An evening in Casa Lussu, during the annual event *Un caffè ad Armungia* (2017). Photo: Simone Mizzotti

The two museums, and an annual festival, joined a national network of small villages.<sup>10</sup> The driving forces are actors trained in higher education and with strong innovative planning views. It is key that local authorities and historical communities discover how to adopt this new perspective and to move towards a new inclusive common definition of local community.

*Overcoming the ideology of modernity and the Armungia lesson: heritage as a sustainability key factor*

It happens frequently that local marginalised communities adopt, almost self-denigrating and neglecting its values, the ideology of modernity, marrying the fate of the inevitable abandonment of marginal and rural areas. It is yet necessary to overcome subordination to cities and urban culture, claiming new perspectives for young people. Crafts and agricultural biodiversity may be positive predisposing factors for the renewal of local identities.

The case of Armungia shows in a nutshell these possibilities that could make it a good example in the field of heritage management, aiming to develop an integrated approach to heritage combining key factors as the public-private relationship, and the connection between intangible heritage, museums, historical landscape, natural heritage and food biodiversity. As an outcome of the balanced combination of these factors, a qualitative sustainable touristic development should be adequately manageable over time.

## **The case of the *Ecomuseum Casilino ad Duas Lauros*: dialogical approaches to defining cultural heritage from the suburbs of Rome, Italy**

*Alessandra Broccolini and Claudio Gnessi*

*Le 'periferia storica' di Roma. The historical suburbs of Rome*

In the beginning of this century, the eastern suburbs of Rome, a 'historic' suburb, particularly rich in archeological ruins and historical landscapes, experienced the impact of internal migrations. Many people moved in from the Italian central-south regions, giving birth to new residential areas, often self-built. People from other areas of Rome, from Apulia, Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Umbria and Sicily, from Friuli, Veneto and other regions, began to live together in the many hamlets.<sup>11</sup> The migration movements also left a visible trace in many areas of the historic outskirts of Rome of Marranella, Villa Certosa, degli Angeli, Alessandrino, Torpignattara, among others.<sup>12</sup>

10 In reference to an on-going initiative of informal network, *la rete dei piccoli paesi*, the 'Italian little villages network', including several association, groups and individuals from the North to the South of Italy. See the online article: *Rete dei piccoli paesi, musei, patrimonio*, <https://www.istitutoeuroarabo.it/DM/rete-dei-piccoli-paesii-musei-patrimonio/> (01/09/2020).

11 The autonomous hamlets and the small hamlets were unofficial settlements, that unlike official ones built during the fascism, made of small houses, huts, shacks, makeshift houses of different kind where the poorest lived, often without the essential services

12 F. Ferrarotti, *Roma, da capitale a periferia*. Rome, 1970; F. Martinelli, *Roma nuo va: borgate spontanee e insediamenti pubblici. Dalla marginalità alla domanda dei servizi*. Milan, 1990 [4a ed.].

This area played an important role in the Resistance to Fascism.<sup>13</sup> Over time it developed, from a social point of view, in a mosaic of sub-proletariat, proletariat, lower middle class in an area now included in Municipio V and composed of various subareas, each one with its own physiognomy.

Urbanization has led to a continuous erosion of pieces of *campagna romana*, 'Roman countryside' which over the years have gradually been removed from the green areas to make room for new built-up areas. Of this all remains today a green area, the Casilino *Ad Duas Lauros* area, also fragmented, composed of various 'pieces' of green that survived the urbanisation, which here and there overlook the inhabited areas, for a total of 140 hectares in small part public, and mostly in the hands of private owners.

In this area already since the 1970s the District Committees made their voices heard to claim services, rights, houses, green, in an area that has long been deprived of essential services. But over the years the territory has changed; after an exodus of old inhabitants also due to small crime problems, in the 1990s the area gradually became a residence district for a number of migrant communities, especially Bangladeshis (the area was renamed Banglatown), but also Chinese, Latin American and others. This process was marked by an ongoing confrontation between old and new residents, and by a growing young population of students. All of the newcomers – students and migrants – being attracted by the low cost of houses that was also determined by the state of deterioration of the old urban fabric.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Birth of a citizen's movement and an ecomuseum*

In 2009 the Municipality of Rome cancelled the landscape restrictions by the Lazio Regional Administrative Court dating back to 2006. This was the consequence of an appeal filed many years earlier by the *Centro Direzionale Casilino* Consortium, a group of owners of the land of the aforementioned district, which has several million cubic meters of concrete on the area. In 2009, in fact, during a meeting at the Periphery Development Department of the Municipality of Rome, a self-styled urban redevelopment project was presented. The intervention area was precisely that of the Casilino district in *Duas Lauros*, which would have been submerged by over three million cubic meters of concrete in order to build a new residential district, roads and services.

Some residents protested against the destruction of one of the few green lungs of the area, arguing that it was a valuable landscape and an archaeologically relevant space; the municipal authorities however made the argument that there was nothing 'important' in this area and that this project would cultivate this *terra di risulta*, 'waste land'.

13 S. Ficacci, *Tor Pignattara. Fascismo e Resistenza di un quartiere romano*. Milan, 2007.

14 Broccolini, A., 'Torpignattara/Banglatown: Processes of re-urbanization and rhetorics of locality in an outer suburb of Rome', in: B. Thomassen and I. Clough Molinaro (eds.), *Global Rome. Changing Faces of the Eternal City*. Blomington and Indianapolis, 2014, p. 81-98; A. Broccolini and V. Padiglione (eds.), *Ripensare i margini. L'Ecomuseo Casilino per la periferia di Roma*. Rome, 2016.

Such a qualification deeply shocked the participants. The Casilino Observatory was created to represent the different neighborhoods of the area. Two authors of this contribution, Alessandra Broccolini and Claudio Gnessi, witnessed the dramatic moment in which the citizens of the Torpignattara District Committee, along with many other movements in the area, became aware of the urgency.<sup>15</sup> A group of citizens decided to oppose a development model centered on the 'myth of cement' and on the modernist rhetoric of the 'requalification' of neighborhoods of the suburbs. An alternative model was expressed instead with the proposal for establishing an ecomuseum which was intended as a participatory project for the enhancement and safeguarding of the various forms of heritage in the area: environmental, archaeological, anthropological, and urban.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Ecomuseum as a participatory tool for the management of the territory*

After about one year of intense reflection, the trajectory of *Ecomuseo Casilino ad Duas Lauros* was set up. A new Association for the Casilino Ecomuseum in Duas Lauros was entrusted with the tasks of launching territorial research, building community maps through participatory laboratories, managing relations with institutions and developing an urban planning project for the area, to be based on the principles of safeguarding and enhancing the environmental, landscape and cultural heritage. The research activity was inaugurated by a public event, *Towards the Ecomuseum*, which was organized in the format of a real intercultural feast including all the communities and inviting them to imagine the future Ecomuseum.

In a short time laboratory activities started up involving schools, associations, religious communities, elderly centers and institutions. The meetings were aimed at identifying on one hand the points of view from which to move towards the interpretation of the territory, and on the other hand to collectively survey and map the various environmental, landscape and cultural resources. To structure the process, it was decided to limit the intervention area to the Tor Pignattara district only, in order to test a model that could be replicated in other contexts of the Ecomuseum. From these activities it became clear that, in addition to a remarkable archaeological, landscape and environmental wealth, there was an even more dense and real complex of intangible heritage elements which make the foundation of the sense of identity of the various communities. A conflicting, plural, complex identity that represented the true wealth of the territory, and

15 For a reflection on the process that led to this bottom-up process in the Roman suburbs, see: A. Broccolini and V. Padiglione (eds.), *Ripensare i margini. L'Ecomuseo Casilino per la periferia di Roma*. Rome, 2016.

16 For a story and a reflection on ecomuseums, not only in Italy, see H. de Varine and D. Jalla, 'Oltre l'ecomuseo?', in: S. Vesco (ed.), *Gli Ecomusei. La cultura locale come strumento di sviluppo*. San Giuliano Terme, 2011, p. 23-48; A. Muzzioli and F. Gabrielli, 'Ecomuseo Casilino, La Rocca Fortezza Culturale', in: E. Turco (ed.) *Guida Verace di Tor Pignattara. Un mappamonde di quartiere*. Rome, 2020; D. Di Leo and J. Forester (eds.), *Reimagining Planning. How Italian Urban Planners are changing Planning Activities*. Rome, 2018.

therefore the lever on which to push and to build the collective awareness necessary to support the Casilino Ecomuseum project.

*Identifying, mapping, researching and documenting to build an alternative narrative. The Co.Heritage programme*

The preliminary research, completed in 2014, provided results that completely reversed the narrative undergone so far, identifying a very rich patrimonial complex in the territory. This evidence, combined with militant activity, led to the failure of the municipal redevelopment project which was withdrawn just at the end of 2014. The Casilino district was safe(guarded) and the Casilino Ecomuseum was born.<sup>17</sup>

With the abandon of the municipal redevelopment project, new planning laboratories were launched, aimed at drafting the set-up plan of the Casilino Ecomuseum. In the meantime, the research continued, culminating in 2016 with the presentation of the first series of six community maps. It was the completion of the research in the Tor Pignattara area which had led, through over 300 hours of workshops, to map over 200 resources of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. During this event the inhabitants of the districts of Pigneto, Centocelle and Gordiani were asked to adhere to the research model, and to scale it also in their territories. Thus were born, on one side the 'Sundays of the Casilino Ecomuseum' and on the other 'The days of the territory' and finally the 'Co.Heritage' programme.<sup>18</sup> The first one aims to tell the research of the Casilino Ecomuseum to the territory from unpublished points of view. The second responds to the need to create a moment of collective reflection on the issues of safeguarding and protecting the cultural heritage. And the third, the Co.Heritage programme, intends to create training courses aimed at bringing out how the cultural heritage is perceived and recognized by the various local communities, with particular attention to migrants, children and the elderly.

Today there are three open-air street art museums, three prestigious archaeological areas, two naturalistic-landscape areas and a meaningful intangible heritage complex. Each space is managed by a local 'community of practice' (be it an association, an informal committee, a religious community or a cultural institution) and the Casilino Ecomuseum is the glue between all of these, realizing exhibitions, organizing visits in collaboration with communities and a wide range of other shared activities.

*Reversing narratives: the Casilino Ecomuseum as a museum*

What in the head of some bureaucrat was a 'waste land' has revealed itself as a place with a significant cultural heritage, recognised by the communities that live there and appreciated by visitors and scholars. This long process has led to the creation of a community organization, made up of citizens, associations, third sector enterprises, ... All of them are united by the need to promote a harmonious development of the territory, for which they found a

17 *Ecomuseo Casilino Ad Duas Lauros*, [www.ecomuseocasilino.it](http://www.ecomuseocasilino.it) (01/09/2020).

18 *Il progetto Co.Heritage 2018*, [www.ecomuseocasilino.it/coheritage/2018/02/20/il-progetto-co-heritage-2018/](http://www.ecomuseocasilino.it/coheritage/2018/02/20/il-progetto-co-heritage-2018/) (01/09/2020).



Figure 2. Community map made with a community of migrant women, aimed at telling the intangible cultural heritage produced by foreign communities (2018). Photo: Luisa Fabriziani

way through the safeguarding and enhancement of the local cultural heritage. This community organization has recently been officially acknowledged by the Lazio Region, which welcomed the Casilino Ecomuseum among the territorial museum institutions, including them in the Regional Museum Organization. This is an important outcome, indicating the reversal of the narrative that had for so long characterised these places, currently defining the area of the Casilino Ecomuseum as an area of regional interest *ex lege*.

Conducting and assisting this Ecomuseum ‘capitalisation’ process within the civil society bottom-up movements was not an easy process; it required long maturation processes, produced conflicts, needed negotiations, and generated various changes within the new collective entity under construction and definition. The process towards forming the Ecomuseum community lasted a few years and is a process of continuous definition, linked to a territory crossed by numerous *heritage frictions*. Both as anthropologists and as residents we have followed this process, we have participated in an engaged form, motivated, and at times also struggling and suffering.

#### *The making of a new heritage community*

Throughout this dialogical process the ecomuseum imaginative frame defined itself, and a new ‘heritage community’ of citizens began to connect, to know each other, to frequent each other, to plan and create, generating a new form of appropriation of urban space and envisioning the territory as an imaginative resource for the future.<sup>19</sup>

19 The two authors of this article are both long-term residents of the neighbourhood.

From that moment on, the territory has been crossed – be it not without conflict – by important cultural stimuli, transversal and hybrid projects by the new ‘eco-museum community’, together with the District Committee and many other protagonists of the cultural policies in the neighborhood.

If initially it was the perception of an emergency that characterized the objective of the ecomuseum project, over time it went beyond the action of protest and resistance against cementing, and beyond the need for green spaces. An awareness of the open and holistic nature of the heritage emerged. The different actors realized how heritage is connected and integrated in the contemporary and everyday life, understanding the complexity of the territory, composed by places of sociality as well as street art, worship, or storytelling as an indissoluble whole.

The Casilino Ecomuseum is not consolidated today in a traditional museum building and structure and it does not receive public funding (the institutional involvement is still weak). It is, instead, the expression of a collective project. It exists and is embodied through its projects and by a public visibility of which the ‘ecomuseum community’ is the promotor. It represents a framework for social and cultural reassessment, expressing the significance of a territory for a group of citizens. Here, an idea of belonging through new relationship practices is in a permanent (or ongoing) process of definition.

Hence, the imaginative Ecomuseum space is functioning as an activator of projects and planning, giving meaning to civil action in a new way that overcomes both the usual forms of political participation and the traditional forms of community solidarity. It is a territorial movement of proximity, configuring diverging practices within a network dimension. It produces a new interpretative frame of one’s own cultural world, which develops itself through relationships, connecting individual action with public space.

## **Reflections from the Italian experiments with ecomuseums in rural villages and the suburbs**

*Valentina Lapicciella Zingari*

*Casa Lussu: an innovative project on traditional craftsmanship, building a new cultural ecosystem*

Living in Armungia means to experiment an unforgettable experience, sharing time with a deeply rooted community, understanding the challenges of the choice made by Barbara Candia and Tommaso Lussu when deciding to come back from the big urban centers to the village of their ancestors in rural Sardinia, and to do so in a creative way.

What are the components of this ‘local landscape’ and what local resources represent the potential to start a new economy? Reading the description of Pietro Clemente and Tommaso Lussu, we discover that research in anthropology and archeology have played an important role in a time that preceded the ICH approach of traditional handcraft revitalization and renewal.

Here we wish to focus on the role museums have in the local life and in particular in connection with the traditional handcraft revitalization project of Barbara and Tommaso. There are two archeological, historical/ethnographical

small local museums. They have contributed in the past three decades to a slow movement of awareness raising on the values of the local and – more generally – of rural heritage. They tried to tweak and to reverse the modern fate of the peasant heritage as popular, subaltern and outdated culture. They contributed in different ways to build the foundations of a *cultural ecosystem*.

According to Pietro Clemente and Tommaso Lussu, the museum is a local activator of cultural awareness and self-esteem, contributing to new possible developments, starting the heritage-making process. Living activities, based on local heritage, boosted the reversal of the socio-economic decline process. The handcraft-revitalizing project started a process of new development possibilities for Armungia, connecting a complex of cultural activities in a post-modern and post-agricultural era.

Here the example of the challenges faced by the Casa Lussu experience help us to recognize ICH as a vital factor in building a sustainable future, together with museums. The role of community-based handcraft is crucial. According to Pietro Clemente: “In a sense, the factors of sustainable development have not been the more classical heritage, such as museums and *nuraghe*, but those of innovation guided by tradition such as craftsmanship and biodiversity based on new practical knowledge and on an intangible heritage that comes from experiences of the past.”

#### *The Casilino Ecomuseum: reversing narratives*

The Casilino Ecomuseum, as a citizen initiative, became over time a creative laboratory reflecting the complexity of a superdiverse urban context. The spirit of this large and inclusive social project lies in the sharing of authority and its dialogical approach. Born from conflict, it motivated the willing to look for innovative tools for *giving the voice* to the different groups involved into this suburban area. The ecomuseum paradigm provided an adequate methodology to face the challenges of such a complex social context, contributing to the creation of a space of dialogue and creativity, a contact-zone that was also directly inspired by the participatory ICH paradigm.

Is the word ‘museum’ still pertinent to grasp and understand this experience? What kind of heritage processes are activated by the ‘ecomuseum’ paradigm in this superdiverse urban context? Being an engaging and inclusive museum, the Casilino story meets the spirit of the UNESCO 2003 Convention:

“(...) endeavor to ensure that their safeguarding plans and programmes are fully inclusive of all sectors and strata of the society, including indigenous people, migrants, immigrants and refugees, people of different ages and genders, persons with disabilities and members of vulnerable groups, in conformity with article 11 of the Convention.”  
(Operational Directive 174)

A dimension to highlight, learning this process, is the need for institutional recognition. The (eco)museum model and paradigm demonstrate an interesting power. To provide enough strength to defend (or ‘empower’) the interests of the groups that make up the process of such civil society initiative,

the dialogue with institutions and the acquisition of legitimacy, is a crucial challenge. According to Claudio Gnessi: “This community institution has recently been officially acknowledged by the Lazio Region, which welcomed the Casilino Ecomuseum among the territorial museum institutions, including them in the Regional Museum Organization. An important outcome, which reverses the narrative that has always characterized these places, as it defines the area of the Casilino Ecomuseum as an area of regional interest *ex lege*.”

The ecomuseum is, in this case, the device of legitimacy of a living social process, flexible and open but also competitive with more classical institutions and museums. If we would consider the impact and importance of the social means and functions realized as criteria for museum’s work and accomplishments, the (value of) ecomuseum activities would probably be estimated higher than those of many other more ancient cultural institutions.

### *Heritage as a sustainability key factor*

In the two descriptions of Casa Lussu and Ecomuseo Casilino, we find a series of key-concepts: reversing narratives, changing the ‘modernist rhetoric’, building and supporting processes of resistance and resolution of conflict in cases of controversial heritages. These concepts are helpful for the interpretation of concrete processes taking shape in both case-studies presented. In particular, I want to point out the process of acquiring legitimacy, generated through combining and accumulating the translation capacity of cultural brokers, cultivating the dialogue with the scientific field, and at the same time activating the attention and involvement of regional/national institutions and policies.

Similar developments were at work, in both the rural as well as the urban contexts we have explored. For Casa Lussu, the context of ‘inner areas’, which are depopulated and at risk of devitalisation, are object of a national strategy in Italy.<sup>20</sup> For Ecomuseum Casilino, in the context of urban suburbs, it concerns a question of overpopulation and a serious situation of non-recognition of cultural affiliations and a multilayered heritage waiting for possibilities of expression. In the two cases, we are facing the major challenge that culture is being missed as one of the basic pillars in sustainable development processes, as I have indicated also previously in my contribution to the publication realised in the context of the IMP project.<sup>21</sup> When culture become a matter of

20 A national Italian strategy, is devoted to the inner area, as reported in the official website of the Italian Council of Ministers. “As part of the regional cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 cycle, particular attention – as a tool for the development of the entire country – was placed on the so-called ‘internal areas’. The predominant part of the Italian territory (about sixty percent of the national territory) is characterized by the presence of small municipalities, far from essential services – such as school, health and mobility – and the marginalization of these areas therefore assumes ‘national’ importance; the policy document for the programming of the regional policy *Methods and Objectives for an Effective Use of Community Funds 2014-2020*, has in fact recognized that the development of the entire country also depends on the development of its internal areas.” [Translation from the original]

21 V. Lapicciarella Zingari, ‘Sustainable development: why is culture missing?’, in T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Bruges, 2020, p. 56-58.

human rights, as evocated by the Marshall Shalins introduction to the 1995 UNESCO report *Our creative diversity*, it makes visible the connection between cultural heritage and human well-being.<sup>22</sup> Revealing the power of living cultural heritage as a key factor to build sustainable models and experiences, creates alternative and heritage-driven ways of life.

*Crossing dreams: rural and urban utopias in concrete life-experiences*

During several years, starting from the period of first discussions on its concept in 2016, the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* brought together so many and different experiences of museums and – but also as<sup>23</sup> – heritage communities, groups and individuals, by bringing together ideas and dreams, really helping us to nourish our critical and constructive reflections on heritage, museums, international conventions at work, and allowing us to evaluate limits and potentials of our human tools together.

In these 2020 confinement times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, let us conclude this short reflection on the irreplaceable value of experience and human relations. Our connective meetings have revealed us the importance to share lived experiences, made of encounters between minds and bodies, looks and smiles in their infinite expressions. Strengthening intercultural dialogue means to cultivate these embodied and shared imaginaries, building spaces of expression for biographical approaches to cultural heritage. Telling the story of the Casa Lussu and Casilino experiences, and listening to the voices of Tommaso Lussu and Claudio Gnessi to the occasion of IMP sessions in Rotterdam, Palermo and Bern allowed to *see* and *grasp* the power of embodied experience. These are two stories that at the same time also embody a concrete demonstration of how change is possible, with shared dreams as the substance for a better future.

22 *Our creative diversity: report of the World Commission on Culture and Development*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000101651> (01/09/2020).

23 In reference to the conceptualization of museum as part of “heritage communities”, as defined by the Council of Europe 2005 Framework Convention on the social value of heritage for society, also named Faro Convention, see M Jacobs’ reflections: M. Jacobs, ‘CGIs and intangible heritage communities, museums engaged’, in: T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Bruges, 2020, p. 41.