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Cultural Policies of Safeguard of Traditional Heritage. The Sicilian case

Gabriella D'Agostino

Laboratorio de Investigación e Innovación en Cultura y Desarrollo, L+iD
Nodo Università di Palermo, Italia
gabriella.dagostino@unipa.it

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Laboratorio de Investigación e Innovación en Cultura y Desarrollo, L+iD®

Nodo Cartagena
Campus Casa Lemaitre
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Resumen. El artículo documenta la experiencia de cooperación entre la Universidad de Palermo (Italia) y el Departamento de Patrimonio Cultural y Natural y Educación Pública de la Gobernación de la Región Sicilia, que remonta al final de los años setenta del siglo XX. Esta experiencia es todavía considerada un modelo de buenas prácticas basado en el nexo entre cultura y desarrollo, enfocada hacia la recuperación del patrimonio tradicional. La autora propone una evaluación de corto, medio y largo plazo de sus efectos en el territorio siciliano, examinando temas de memoria e historia, y reflexionando sobre los procesos de auto-objetivación de la cultura propia por parte de quienes habitan en este territorio.

Palabras clave: patrimonio tradicional, desarrollo, Sicilia, políticas culturales, cultura material.

Línea de Investigación del L+iD: Diversidad cultural e interculturalidad; Políticas culturales y desarrollo local.

Abstract. The paper reconstructs an experience of cooperation between the University of Palermo and the Department of Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage and Public Education of the Sicilian Regional Government, that took place at the end of 1970s. This experience is still regarded as a model of good practice based on the connection “culture and development” and focused on the recovery of traditional heritage. The author proposes an evaluation on short, medium and long-term effects on the Sicilian territory, dealing with notions such as memory and history, and discussing on the mechanism of objectivation of one’s own culture.

Keywords: Traditional Heritage; Development; Sicily; Cultural Policies, Material Culture.

Lines of Research: Cultural Policy and Local Development; Cultural Diversity and Interculturality

1. Working for the Safeguard of Traditional Heritage in Sicily as a “good practice” of joining Culture and Development

My paper is about an experience of cooperation between the University of Palermo (along with the Universities of Catania and Messina) and the Department of Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage and Public Education of the Regional Government, that took place in Sicily (Italy) at the end of 1970s. I will present this case because, in my opinion, it is a model of good practice based on the “culture and development” connection and allows us to evaluate the short, medium and long-term effects of this approach on our territory.

Despite a blind and out-dated rhetoric that, at least in Italy, is still popular (as witnessed by the Latin expression: *Carmina non dant panem*, or, in a rougher way: “culture does not feed you”), nowadays it is absolutely certain that there is no development outside a cultural dimension. In fact, the search for strategies of economic development based on a cultural dimension is the only approach that allows us to achieve solid and durable results together with the construction of citizenship and the sense of common good. The capability (or capabilities) approach proposed by Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000, 2003, 2008) is one of the most interesting theoretical and methodological horizons for those political and economic programs aimed to attain non short-term goals and concerned with the specificity of cultural contexts.

Before going into the core of my speech, I have to stress an important aspect of the experience I wish to tell you about, that opened a new perspective at that time and, even if far in the past, is still significant. In 1978, the Sicilian Regional Government took some measures for youth employment (L.R. 37/1978). Among them, the census of ethnographic heritage is perhaps the one that best qualifies that policy. Many young people had just been employed in different municipalities, chosen from a special list of unemployed youth. The program of the Department of Heritage of the Sicilian Government decided to assign them the important task of taking, for the first time, a census of the ethnographic heritage of the whole island.

In Italy, Sicily is a special Administrative Region. It means that the regional government can issue laws on many different topics, autonomously from Italy. For the subject we are interested in, the Sicilian government issued a special law about cultural and natural heritage in 1977 (Law n. 80), of which ethnographic heritage (i.e.: traditional, popular culture) is considered a fundamental part. The National Law about the same matter will recognise ethnographic heritage as a realm to protect, study, valorise etc. as well as Art, Archaeology (in one word as Culture with Capital letter), only in 1998.

The Regional Government established also a Regional Committee of Cultural and Environmental Heritage equipped with a centre for restoration; a centre for inventory, cataloguing and graphic, photographic, aerial-photographic, audio-visual documentation; the superintendents (*Soprintendenze*), that is authorities in the public administration devoted to the protection of the heritage of cities and territories, according to its different areas (fine arts, archaeology, architectural heritage, environmental heritage, traditional and ethnographic heritage), each authority being conceived as a techno-scientific structure.

Those legislative acts are the results of a close working relation between the Regional Committee of Heritage and the University of Palermo (in particular, the former Institute for anthropological and geographical sciences of the Faculty of Humanities). Starting from the end of 1970s, the Regional Committee and the Institute promoted many activities such as workshops, classes, exhibitions etc., specifically devoted to the education of the staff engaged in the ethnographic (popular, traditional) heritage.

Coming back to the Census of the Sicilian ethnographic heritage, the technical and scientific training for the young people recruited in that project was under the responsibility of the above mentioned Institute of the University of Palermo, for the provinces of Palermo, Agrigento and Trapani; of the University of Catania for the territory for the whole province of Catania; and of the University of Messina for the other Sicilian provinces.

From June 1979 to December 1980, after an intensive theoretical and methodological training, the participants worked to a census of the tools used in traditional cycles of production. It is important to emphasize the method they followed in this task. Seasonal cycles dominated Sicilian life for centuries, “from the cradle to the grave” and guided cultural codes and behaviours. The island’s primary economic activity was extensive grain farming. Up to the beginning of the 1950s, one-third of the land on the island belonged to approximately a thousand families, and the agricultural practices were still very archaic. Ploughing, for instance, was performed with the use of animal-drawn ploughs,

while tools were made by local artisans. Harvest involved groups of farmers, mostly seasonal, recruited to work in the island's vast inland fiefs.

The organization of work was almost identical everywhere, save for a few local variations. Starting in 1950s, the agricultural environment had considerably changed, due to a different organization and mechanization of work, to different harvesting and irrigation systems, and to the disappearance of certain crops such as cotton, flax, and sugar cane. Along with the transformations occurred in rural areas, the socio-cultural setting had mostly changed due to a progressive depopulation of the countryside and other areas depending on the agro-pastoral structure of economy and to the resulting growth of urban areas. This phenomenon had partially modified the cultural setting of Sicily (cf. D'Agostino, 2006).

Therefore, starting from the traditional working tools meant, on the one hand, to recover and study a world not yet totally disappeared because many actors were still alive and could help recovering information on the economic, social, cultural and symbolic levels of that world; on the other hand this allowed them to understand the transformation of the Sicilian society and to compare different worldviews.

As a consequence of this method, the search had to avoid considering objects as single, unique, ancient pieces; it had to stress the focus of the project: the complex texture of a traditional society and its productive activities (agriculture, sheep-farming, fishing, mining activities). So, the participants had to conduct a real fieldwork in order to understand the depth and the articulation of the production mode, the technologies in use, the connected social relationships. The focus was on the cycle of production, and only after studying it, the young researcher could concentrate on a specific tool and catalogue it. Every catalogued tool represented a moment of the productive process and was needed to prepare the catalogue cards referred to the same cycle. In a few words they concentrated on the process and on the occurrences of the tool's use within it.

A typical card would contain, besides the essential items to identify the object, references to: 1) the productive cycle (when and how the object was used); 2) the relations of production; 3) the symbolic value of the object (if there was one), which means embedding the object into a wider ideological horizon (beliefs and/or symbolic practices connected to the object).¹

¹ On the census, see Giacomarra 1984: 619-631; on the arrangement of the card and of its items, see Vibaek (1984; pp. 633-640).

2. A Brief History of the Studies on Sicilian Traditional Culture

The choice of these classification criteria must be considered within a wider theoretical and methodological background. On the one hand, there is a disciplinary path that we can call “folklore” or “history of popular traditions”, on the other, in Sicily this path has been soon related to the public presentation of the material and to the symbolic aspects of popular cultural heritage. The obligatory reference is to Giuseppe Pitrè (1841-1916), a Palermitan scholar who introduced a proper method and a specific profile for doing research about folklore. He called his approach: *Demopsychology* and taught this subject at the University of Palermo starting in 1911. His enormous commitment was manifest in the *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane* (Library of Sicilian Popular Traditions Folklore), a work in twenty-five volumes published between 1870 and 1913. It includes songs, tales, legends, habits, customs, beliefs, festivals and performances, material culture, folk medicine, and more.

Pitrè, in other terms, considered the traditional culture as a whole, and all daily objects, productive activities, magic-religious practices were central in his conception of folk culture. On the occasion of the National Exhibition in Milan in 1888, and of the Universal Exhibition in Palermo in 1891-92, he collected many objects to set up an ethnographic exhibition on Sicily, on behalf of the Organizing Committee. The Exhibition in Palermo had a Catalogue with drawings of the objects shown. Their typologies were: *costumes; ordinary domestic objects; agriculture; pastoralism; hunting; vehicles; food; spectacles and feasts; amulets; ex-votos; devotional objects; toys and games for children; popular books and leaflets.*

This simple list can give us an idea of his view of folklore, and shows how wider his conception was in comparison with his contemporary scholars (not only in Italy, but also in Europe and elsewhere).

As happened in other cases (for examples, in London, Stockholm, and Copenhagen), after the Universal Exhibition a museum was established in Palermo: the Ethnographic Sicilian Museum, that will remain open until 1916. In 1935, Giuseppe Cocchiara, a sort of ideal pupil of Pitre, who taught Popular Traditions at the University of Palermo (starting from the 1930s, he redefined the disciplinary statute of Demology and Ethnology in Italy) re-launched the Museum closed after Pitre's death, and reorganised it in a new location, the “Casina alla Cinese” (Chinese Pavillon) in the “Parco della Favorita”, a huge park which used to be the game reserve of Bourbon Kings at the end of Eighteenth century.

In order to reorganise the Ethnographic Museum, now entitled to Giuseppe Pitrè, Cocchiara followed the examples of the most important ethnographic museums in Europe at that time. First of all, he stressed the special nature of these kinds of collections that, unlike art collections, are not significant in themselves, but only because they are part of a complex series of relationships into which they are embedded. Their aesthetic dimension is secondary with respect to their function and they allow us to enter the economic, social, ideological, symbolic dimensions of traditional society. Cocchiara conceived a museum as a research laboratory, a work in progress, a place where to recompose the work of history, of society, of technics. As for museography and museology, these ideas would take over only at the end of the 1960s.

In 1965 Cocchiara died and, once again, the conditions of the museum were not good, because the municipality did not care of it. In that while, in Palermo, the Association for the Conservation of Popular Traditions was born and started moving, together with the University, towards the study and retrieval of traditional knowledge in a context, as the Sicilian one was after the Second World War, when people abandoned countryside and settled in the urban side.

In 1967, the Association organised a symposium on the future of Museo Pitrè and, more generally, on the relationship between folklore and museography. The participants were anthropologists, folklorists, architects, and urbanists. This symposium is at the origin of any project concerning traditional cultural heritage realised in Sicily until 1990s. The opening address was given by Alberto Cirese (an anthropologist from the University of Rome). His arguments set the theoretical and methodological basis for museography in Sicily as well as in Italy, for a long time.

Cirese insisted on the deep antinomy life/museum, especially in ethnographic museums where the aim is not the object in itself, but the context of its connections with other objects and aspects of the culture and the society where it comes from. He underlined the logical and methodological mistake that was responsible for confining to a museum what by definition should not be confined. This mistake can be removed via the museographic meta-language, that accounts for the relationship between objects and their logical nexus in the net to which they belong. In this way objects, that would otherwise remain silent, become meaningful and considered in their mutual relations.

What happened after the symposium can be summarised as follows: in 1970 a group of scholars, including some members of the University of Palermo, founded the Folkstudio, an institution devoted

to the research and documentation of folk, traditional songs and their revival²; in 1975 this group gave rise to the Museo internazionale delle Marionette (International Puppets Museum), especially devoted to Opera dei Pupi Theatre (Puppet Theatre), very popular in Sicily until 1950s; from 1975 to 1980 more than twenty exhibitions on peasant activities and popular culture were organized in many Sicilian towns and villages³ along with two international congresses about “The material culture in Sicily”, in 1978, and “Traditional crafts. Organisation, techniques, languages”, in 1980⁴.

All these initiatives were realised with the support of the Department of Heritage of the Regional Government that in 1978 launched that census I mentioned above. An important role in this context was played by the Museographic Service, an office of the Faculty of Humanities born in the same years, with the aim of counselling public and private institutions on the safeguard and enhancement

² For an accurate reconstruction of the circumstances leading to the foundation of Folkstudio and of the related research activity (promotion, presentation and dissemination of scientific results, editorial series, typology of archives, discography, musical performances) see Guggino 1994. From 1997 to 2005 Folkstudio published, under the patronage of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage and Education, the “Archivio delle tradizioni popolari siciliane” (“Archive of Sicilian popular traditions”). This series included monographs on different aspects of traditional culture, with special attention to ethnomusicology. Moreover, the Department supported, over the years, Folkstudio’s activity concerning the recovery and promotion of traditional songs and instrumental music. Among others, we recall “Echos: methods and techniques of ethnomusicological investigations”, a 3-year theoretical and practical course for the training of professionals and researchers started in 1986 (see Garofalo 1990; Finocchiaro 1991, 1993). Sound documents gathered by Folkstudio have been made available in several anthologies, some of which published under the patronage of the Department of Heritage (see Bonanzinga, Garofalo 1997: 109; Bonanzinga 1997: 114-115).

³ A partial documentation of the topics under investigation, of the acquired skills, and of the remarkable results achieved during the 1970’s and 1980’s can be found in the two-volume work *I colori del sole. Arti popolari in Sicilia e Le forme del lavoro. Mestieri tradizionali in Sicilia* (see: Buttitta (ed.) 1985 and 1988; a second edition of the latter was published in 1990 without pictures and colour tables). The series “Studi e materiali per la storia della cultura popolare” launched by the “Associazione per la conservazione delle tradizioni popolari” (“Association for the conservation of popular traditions”), which often hosted the catalogues of the exhibitions set up over the years, may also represent a valid support for reconstructing the history of those years and beyond: - 1975: A. Pasqualino, *I pupi siciliani*; - 1977: E. Guggino - G. Pagano, *La mattanza*; - 1977: A. Buttitta - S. D’Onofrio - M. Figurelli, *Il lavoro contadino nei Nebrodi* (catalogue of the exhibition, Palermo, 17 March - 15 May); - 1978: A. Buttitta - R. Guttuso, *Forma e colore del carretto siciliano: i fratelli Ducato* (catalogue of the exhibition, Palermo, 18 July - 30 September); A. Cusumano, *Mestieri e lavoro contadino nella Valle del Belice* (catalogue of the exhibition, Palermo, 10-30 November); - 1981: A. Cusumano, *Pani e dolci nella Valle del Belice* (catalogue of the exhibition, Gibellina, 29 March - 19 April); - 1982: A. Cusumano, *La tessitura popolare nella Valle del Belice* (catalogue of the exhibition, Gibellina, 9 January - 7 February); A. Cusumano, *Pani e dolci nella Valle del Belice* (catalogue of the exhibition, Gibellina, 27 March - 2 May); A. Buttitta, *L’isola ritrovata* (catalogue of the exhibition, 17-25 April); A. Buttitta, *I colori del sole* (catalogue of the exhibition, Palermo, 30 June - 4 July); A. Buttitta - S. D’Onofrio, *La terra colorata* (catalogue of the exhibition, Santo Stefano di Camastra, without date); - 1983: A. Cusumano, *Arti e mestieri nella Valle del Belice. Il cuoio, il legno, il ferro* (catalogue of the exhibition, Gibellina, 7 May - 5 June, Campobello di Mazara, 7-9 September); - 1984: S. D’Onofrio - J. Vibaek, *Il museo civico di Bisacquino* (catalogue of the museum); S. D’Onofrio, *Le arti del fuoco. I carbonai dei Nebrodi* (catalogue of the exhibition, 22 December - 12 January 1985); - 1985: *Arti e mestieri nella Valle del Belice. La canna, la corda, l’intreccio* (catalogue of the exhibition, Campobello di Mazara, 2 May - 30 June; Gibellina, 15 September - 15 November); - 1988: A. Cusumano, *Miracoli di carta. Stampe devote e immagini sacre nella Valle del Belice* (catalogue of the exhibition, Mazara del Vallo, 28 May - 12 June); - 1989: S. D’Onofrio, *La terra colorata* (catalogue of the exhibition, Santo Stefano di Camastra, 1-31 August); - 1992: A. Buttitta - A. Cusumano, *Lo specchio della memoria* (catalogue of the exhibition, Campobello di Mazara, 29 November - 31 December).

⁴ The proceedings of these conferences are published in VV. AA. 1980 e VV. AA. 1984.

of ethnographic heritage. Between 1983 and 1989 the Museographic Service, with the support of the Department of Heritage and in cooperation with the Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions in Paris (*Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires*), organised five European Colloquiums devoted to ethno-anthropological museography. Two of these were preceded by training courses focusing on restoring and conservation and on research methods, inventory and cataloguing⁵.

⁵ A selection of the speeches of the five Colloquiums are in Cuisenier, Vibaek 2002. A focus on European debate about ethno-anthropological museography in the 1980s is VV. AA. 1995.

3. Recovering our “Memory of Us”

What do all these experiences represent? Even if I am talking about them in a very simplified way, they represent (starting from Pitre's and Cocchiara's lesson) a way to do research in a territory paying due attention to its internal articulation, in other words: a way of doing fieldwork. The ordinary way of life, its material productions, its ritual rhythms, its anthropological dimension, are the topics of this activity. Starting from the 1970s, on the one hand they recovered “memory of us” carrying out an extended survey of Sicilian culture, on the other hand, they returned to Sicilians (not only those who were involved in the various projects) the acquired knowledge in the form of exhibitions, seminars, workshops.

The semiotic approach to cultural facts, followed by all our scholars engaged in this field at the University of Palermo, has certainly represented a theoretical and methodological novelty and, at the same time, has supported the process of cultural re-appropriation by the social actors. Emphasising the communicative dimension of the objects, in connection with their function, allows us to clarify their meaning, which is socially recognisable: the objects are signs of a specific world, they tell us about how that world is organised for certain groups, showing them all the knowledge they implicitly possess without realizing it. In this interaction between scholars and people, the latter start understanding their place and role in the global reality, and so the relationship between local and global, at any scale we want to consider these terms.

As it has been noticed:

Typical forms of behaving, actions and operations that are coordinated in stable sequences, because of the fact that they are operated according to cultural standardised ways, imply an implicit know-how translated into an order and an organisation that define a specific level of intelligibility that is immanent to coordinated behaviours: it [the level of intelligibility] regulates them from inside and doesn't ask operators either to be conscious of partial segments that, all together, make the entire process intelligible, or of the resultant pattern (Miceli, 1990; p. 117).

However, the presence of the field researchers during the interlocution with their informants, forces them to jump to another logical level. The individual asked to explain the chain of his/her behaviour will go beyond the practice and shift to a meta-knowledge: he will move to a logical level that is hierarchically superior with regard to the ordinary context where the know-how is implemented.

As everybody knows, an objective anthropological knowledge is not possible (not in a positivistic sense), if only because of the perturbative presence of the researcher in the field. The reflexive and dialogic anthropology was born also as an answer to this issue, underlining the negotiating nature of anthropological knowledge: it is the result of an encounter of experiences and mutual comprehension, built on anthropologists' and informants' 'common sense'. If this perspective stresses the fact that the dialogic relationship leads to a progressive acquisition of one's cultural self, both for the anthropologist and the "native", we probably have to consider also what kind of long term effects the process of objectivizing their own culture produces on people and on their cultural behaviour.

The Sicilian case can be a good observatory: 40 years ago, we feared an "ethnocide" of traditional Sicilian culture, but things went differently. Different forms of resistance, revivals, inventions are now under our eyes⁶. We could suppose that this attitude towards the past was not a result of a conscious, informed process, but a surface phenomenon depending on market rules that look at tradition, on a certain idea of tradition aiming mainly at selling goods, supported also by the tourism industry and by the mass media. Under this supposition, it would not be a durable attitude. This is "a risk", of course, that is run everywhere. However, I think that these market-based explanations exchange the effect for its cause: according to me, in this case it is not the supply that has determined the demand, but, on the contrary, the market has intercepted a trend, a need, exploiting and accentuating it.

Generally speaking, I think that the mechanism of objectivation of one's own culture I have discussed above (that is: the process that, letting to space out implicit knowledge and behaviours, produces meta-knowledge of them), is determinant in the process of construction of a present based on the memorial dimension. I am convinced that this dimension is fundamental and a premise for any project of development that aims for a sustainable equilibrium among the past (both as history and memory), the present and the future. As the historian Jacques Le Goff noticed, the comprehension of time and its articulation in past and present requires going back through memory to get rid of present. These actions "require an education, the institution of a collective memory beyond individual memory [...] Historic-social memory receives his data from tradition and education" (Le Goff, 1986; p. 165).

The collective memory of a society is grounded on a work of construction of the temporal extension made by those who handle the power and have control on time (let's think about the social function

⁶ See, for all: Buttitta 1999, 2002, 2013.

of calendars). The historical memory that a society has of itself depends on the manipulation of the notion of time and so its extension “widens” or “shrinks” according to periods and civilizations. One aspect, however, seems to be constant: the more a society feels change as a threat, transformation as a danger, the more there are voices worried about the risk of losing its memory and, at the same time, the society looks back to the past to search for a confirmation to its being there.

4. To conclude

Our time, characterized by very deep transformations, despite all appearance, remembers, commemorates, takes care of the past as perhaps never before. A reflection on the notion of heritage (and the different meanings of 'history' connected with it) could be significant in this sense. Michel de Certeau wrote: "In history, everything starts with the gesture of *putting aside*, of collecting, transforming some objects into 'documents'" (de Certeau, 1974; p.41). If he is right, we can wonder, then, what have societies, along the centuries, *put aside* in order to construct the historical memory and so, how the notion of 'document' has been changing in historiography⁷.

To limit our reference to the institutions that, more than others, have been saving objects transforming them into documents, *i.e.* museums, we could wonder about what kind of history do public museums, which are inheritors of private collections of aristocracy, have been supporting, starting from the Eighteenth Century, in the major European cities; and what happened to the notion of history when, after the second half of the Nineteenth century, folklore museums started to be established in different and peripheral areas of Europe (e.g. Scandinavia, Sicily). What notion of historical 'duration' do we deal with, in these cases? What theory and what kind of knowledge are at the origin of these institutions? Over the last hundred and fifty years, thanks to human sciences – ethnography, anthropology, sociology – the present has been carefully studied. In this sense, one of

⁷ In this perspective, it could be interesting to recall the progressive enlargement of the UNESCO concept of heritage. Starting from the initial notion put forward in the World Heritage Convention in 1972, they gradually extended it to include, in the 2003 Convention, the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The latter refers to "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity". This convention indicates oral traditions and expressions, including language, social practices, rituals and festive events, traditional craftsmanship as domains, among others, to safeguard. Then, in 2005 the convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions emphasizes "the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies, as well as in international development cooperation"; it takes into account "that culture takes diverse forms across time and space and that this diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities and cultural expressions of the peoples and societies making up humanity"; it recognizes "the importance of traditional knowledge as a source of intangible and material wealth, and in particular the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples, and its positive contribution to sustainable development, as well as the need for its adequate protection and promotion". For a discussion on what in Italy is called "paradigma patrimoniale" ("heritage paradigm"), - *i.e.*: how the relationship between 'memory' and 'heritage' are at the basis of the UNESCO aims and programs, how they work in the processes of globalization and, at the same time, in the construction of "imagined communities" -, see: Lowenthal 1985; 1998. In Italy, some anthropologists look at the UNESCO concept of heritage as too "essentialist" and they stress the political and ideological connotation of 'the heritage paradigm'. See, among others: Dei 2002; Palumbo 2003.

the reasons at the basis of this change in research perspective is a new conception of the idea of history, elaborated above all by the scholars of *Les Annales*.

Also researchers in Folklore and popular traditions made a great contribution to this perspective, by reintroducing in history a human dimension, ways of life that were previously ignored. In other words, they made memory as a human faculty, which used to be elitist, more 'democratic'. Documenting the present by connecting it to a past articulated into long periods (very long, as the notion of *longue durée* by Fernand Braudel taught us), they attributed to the present an historical meaning that was unthinkable before⁸.

I think that only this perspective that looks at the past with all necessary corrections and adaptations, can save cultural contexts from the risk of oblivion, because it is able to create proper conditions for a real development, not blotting out but rather emphasizing all the routes followed by persons to be as they are, and by making them conscious of what they can become. The capacity of imagining must be nourished by memory and go beyond it. According to me, this is what development should mean.

⁸ It is not possible to report here on the initiatives realised in Sicily and in Italy after that very 'hot season', by associations and institutions, both public and private. Beyond the quality of their results, their common trait is grounded into the idea that traditional heritage is a fundamental domain to construct, improve and consolidate a durable process of development. In Italy, a remarkable reference point for people, students, scholars, school teachers and everyone who is interested in the perspective of anthropological heritage is SIMBDEA (Società Italiana per la Museografia e i Beni DemoEtnoAntropologici, Italian society for museography and ethno-anthropologic heritage), an association born in 2001:

http://www.simbdea.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=61&Itemid=175. As said on its website, the association "is active on a national level in promoting discussion and research about the most important and urgent issues related to heritage in all its forms and how museums and archives contribute in safeguarding and shaping the knowledge of heritage for the public and civil society. One important instrument of Simbdea's dissemination policy is the periodical *AM-Antropologia Museale*, which deals with museums and heritage from different perspectives, raising many different issues and hosting interviews and contributions from both museum professionals, academics, and policy makers [...]. The focus of the organization, since 2001, has been on: a) safeguarding and promoting traditional tangible and intangible heritage traces and documentation stored in museums; b) promoting a deeper understanding of this heritage and of cultural diversity through museum exhibitions and activities (learning activities within museums, seminars, lessons, conferences, creation of museum exhibitions, temporary and permanent; c) training museum professionals to act for the safeguard and promotion of traditional heritage with deeper awareness of its implications and an ethnographic approach".

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