Consuming space, nature and culture: patrimonial discussions in the hyper-modern era

Ismael Vaccaro (McGill University)
Department of Anthropology and McGill School of Environment
McGill University
isma@u.washington.edu
ismael.vaccaro@mcgill.ca

and

Oriol Beltran (Universitat de Barcelona)
Department of Sociocultural Anthropology and History of America and Africa
University of Barcelona

In this paper we reflect on what we call the process of 'patrimonialization' of culture and nature currently taking place in the Western mountainous inlands of the Spanish Eastern Pyrenees. Landscapes, as cultural and historical formations, are presently being commodified and connected to global networks of consumption dominated by urban and 'postmaterialistic' values. Conservation policies, ski resorts and cultural museums are mushrooming in previously 'abandoned' agricultural fields or vacated factories.
This shift from agriculture, ranching and industry, to conservation and services marks the connection of the Pyrenean valleys to the global modernity and to the hyper-modern era. These processes of transformation have been generally depicted as structural processes of unilateral redefinition of the urban-rural divide: redefinition that results on direct urban appropriation. Rural populations, however, are far from passive subjects of external influences. The analysis of local agency suggests a more complicated picture in which local economic and cultural choices are included as explanatory variables. The story of the connection of these spaces to regional and global networks is not only a story about local dispossession, but also about local ingenuity. The globalization of the economy in the early 1970s disempowered and relegated these areas to the periphery of the economic system. The consolidation of a global modernity articulated around the need to provide leisure has opened a venue for these areas to reconnect themselves to the central networks and to attract large amounts of resources from these urban dominated economic systems.

Numbers and places

In this article we discuss the massive socioeconomic and ecological transformations endured by the Catalan Pyrenees in Northeastern Spain during the last thirty years. In these mountains the territory has been literally taken over by a new wave of uses. Protected areas, ski resorts, and cultural museums mainly compose this territorializing movement. These changes emphasize nature conservation, leisure, and traditional culture preservation. This process inevitably results in the transformation of economy and identity of mountain communities with effects on the ecology of the area. To understand this recent transformative process we have to delve deep into the historical record until the early nineteenth century when the conditions that prepared this contemporary appropriation started to emerge.

The six High Pyrenean districts and the four pre-Pyrenean districts of Catalonia encompass 965,324 hectares[1]. In those districts there are, currently, at least 204 protected areas encompassing 321,918 hectares[2]. This is 33.35% of their territory[3]. There are also 17 ski resorts. It is unclear how many hectares these resorts affect. It is obvious, however, that the social and ecological footprint of a ski resort affects much more territory than the premises of the resorts themselves. The amount of territory and resources that every resort

---

[1] Alt Urgell, Alta Ribagorça, Cerdanya, Pallars Jussà, Pallars Sobirà, Val d'Aran: Berguedà, Garrotxa, Ripolles, and Solsonès.

[2] Here we are only including the areas included in the Pla d'Espais d'Interès Natural (PEIN), the Plan of Spaces with Natural Interest.

[3] The pre-Pyrenean districts, Berguedà, Garrotxa, Ripollès, and Solsonès, only have mountains in their north sections. Most of their protected areas are also concentrated in their northern mountainous sections.

needs exceeds the limits of the specific locality that sustains the runs: we are talking about water, housing, roads, services, and infrastructures in general.

In specific, these numbers are even more striking in districts such as the Pallars Sobirà, Pallars Jussà, the Vall d'Aran, or the Cerdanya. The Pallars Sobirà, for instance, with 137,792 hectares, has 58.2% of its territory under some level of environmental protection (table 1.). It is also affected, in one way or another, by five ski resorts[4]. The Val d'Aran has a 50.4% of its land under some type of conservation policy. The Garrotxa and the Alta Ribagorça have, respectively, a striking 52.1% and 45.7% of their territory under some sort of conservation policy. Of all these districts only the Solsonès has significantly less than 20% of its territory declared natural patrimony (interestingly enough, most of its protected areas are also concentrated in the mountainous north of the district).

Table 1.

In addition, these areas have experienced the emergence of 'cultural museums'. Museums that describe the life, material culture of transhumant shepherds, charcoal miners, timber folk, river rafters, salt producers, textile workers, and so on[5].

This set of connections link these, often historically marginal, areas to the national or regional societies through networks governed by very specific sets of values closely

---

[4] Here we include alpine and cross country ski resorts, as well as resorts currently out of business but that left significant tracks on the landscape.

[5] Parc Cultural de les Salines de Gerri de la Sal, Museu de les Mines de Cercs, Museu dels Pastors de Castellar de n'Hug, Ecomuseu de les Valls a Esterri d'Aneu, Museu del Ciment Asland, Serradora d'Àreu, etc…

associated to leisure and services economies. Most of these initiatives, parks, resorts and museums are arguably created for the use and contemplation of non-local visitors, tourists or ecotourists. The mountains´ natural and cultural values are deemed worth protecting because at some point they are declared national or human patrimony. We call this process patrimonialization. They are patrimonialized. They are preserved because they are valuable not just to the local communities but the national society at large. This value shifts however, from value of direct use to intrinsic and contemplation values (Valdéz 2004).

Such a process has to necessarily result also, in transformations in the way collective identity is constructed. Sense of place is not just locally contextualized but built taking into account a complex battery of places, individuals and concepts from several social and geographical scales (Agrawal and Sivarakrishnan 2003). The network society has integrated the internal periphery of the Western urban world so that identity is the result of both attachment and friction (Castells 1996; Tsing 2004).

This paper analyzes this contemporary process of transformation of mountainous rural areas keeping in mind that we are talking about a postmaterialistic[6] redefinition of natural resources, and a redirection of the demographic, economic and ideological flows associated with their management. Moreover, this reorganization of space, uses, and resources is, more often than not, mediated by urban values and consumption. The tourists

---

[6] Here we are using Inglehart's (1997) definition of post-materialism: ideological framework emerging in societies that have succeed in covering most material needs of the society at large. This material needs are associated to elements such as food, housing, health, decent salary with consumptive capability. This moment usually coincides with the reorganization of industrial, mostly urban societies, into globally connected and service dominated societies.

that consume, nature, leisure and culture are massively non-locals coming from the cities of the lowlands (Böröcz 1996; Cross 1993).

This process of territorial appropriation and redefinition is especially interesting in an area and a type of natural resources in which common property, historically and presently, has been and still is the dominant property regime. In the Catalan Pyrenean mountains, the historical transformations of the property structure, mostly a product of state policies, have preceded changes in productive practices, and have had influence on the demographic patterns and the collective identity of the communities.

In the pages that follow we will, in the first section (*Changing Mountains*), examine the recent history of the Catalan Pyrenees to understand the social processes that set the stage for this post-materialistic appropriation. In the second section (*Patrimonialization and Consumption*) we will revisit the figures provided above in order to trigger further theoretical analysis of the observed process. The final section (*Hyper-modern Place Attachments*) connects this process with local agency. Our account consciously emphasizes territorial and jurisdictional transformations. Our description thus, is largely structural. In this third section we want to re-introduce local agency and strategies into the picture. The goal of is to highlight how local actors have positioned themselves in relation to these new opportunities in order to take advantage of them. Mountaineers are far from passive subjects of history. Finally, it offers some considerations about how the construction of the sense of place, of the individual and collective place-attachment is altered by this hyper-modern era characterized by intensification of communication and permanent, long-distance interactions.

This article is meant to provide a broad overview by identifying, contextualizing and explaining a specific set of social trends currently affecting the Pyrenees. This piece

is the result of a specific research project at the Pallars Sobirà, but we also draw on the results of our own previous investigations elsewhere in the Pyrenees (Berguedà and Val d'Aran) and a survey of recent work conducted in the area. Our methods included a combination of intensive archival research and an array of ethnographic field methods, such as interviews, participant observation, and the interpretation of maps and aerial images among others.

Changing Mountains

Dramatic changes have occurred in the Catalan Pyrenees over the last two hundred years. Each valley and each corner of the range has its own history. Every district and every village has distinctive dynamics. Here, however, we will offer some examples to characterize a general and complex process of social, economic and ecological transformation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the Pyrenean population still worked in agriculture and ranching. Most production was focused on subsistence and short-range trade. There were some notable exceptions of long distance networks involving iron and tools in the Ripollès, wool from the Berguedà to the Pallars Sobirà, and timber was rafted down the large northwestern rivers, the Noguera Pallaresa and the Noguera Ribagorçana.

Communities, however, depended more on their own production than the potential capital generated by trade. This mode of production, present in the area since the early Middle Ages, fostered dispersed settlement patterns. The bottom of the valleys, with their little flat areas suitable for the practice of agriculture and higher potential for connectivity with the low lands, had the major settlements. The ranges nevertheless were packed with

small villages, hamlets, and isolated farms. The pre-industrialization Pyrenean landscape was alive and, in relative terms, densely populated.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century begins the final decline of many of these communities. The modern Spanish state emerges during the second decade of the century. One of the important goals of this modernization was to overcome the old Middle Ages administrative organization of the nation. The pre-modern administrative organization was considered an anachronism with overlapping jurisdictions, a plethora of public and private institutions with non-standardized territorial sizes. To achieve modern efficiency, the officials in charge of restructuring the administrative structure of the country, keeping in mind the rationalistic model consolidated in post-revolutionary France, decided to follow a series of rational and standardized criteria. The conditions were variables such as minimum demographic size, connectivity to markets, and economic viability. Only the communities that complied with those criteria could reach the status of municipality. And only communities that became municipalities were entitled to public services like schools, police, roads, and so on. This was the first large wave of territorialization policies issued by the modern Spanish State[7]. Obviously not too many of these mountain communities had the characteristics of a modern municipality. Most little communities hanging near the top of the ranges and near the mountain passes failed to achieve this legal status. At that point in history, trade was no longer circulating through the paths that crossed the mountain passes. By then, most fluxes were following the network of roads that were being built along the rivers in the main valleys. Communication shifted from a transversal directionality, from valley to valley, to a set of vertical axis following the main valleys flowing south to the low lands and, ultimately, the cities. The inhabitants of the farms and villages of the slopes were

---

[7] Territorialization as used by Braun (2002), Hannah (2000) or Peluso and Vandergeist (2001).

forced more than ever to go down to the valleys. As they had no access or rights to public services they had to go often to the larger valley villages to buy supplies, to bring the kids to school, to issue all kinds of legal permits, search for trading and reproductive partners, and so on. Although there was no compulsory relocation, the incentives and costs were clearly there.

Nowadays, remnants of abandoned villages, crumbling farms, closed churches, neglected paths, or pastures claimed by the forests are the silent witnesses of an era in which every little valley, every rock could be associated to a family or a community. Figures 1 and 2 depict the Valley of Lillet (Berguedà) as an example. The first map represents the network of paths used by the transhumant shepherds. Most of these paths are not used anymore. Associations of hikers keep some paths, and others are still used by the few herds that summer in the high pastures of the Cadí-Moixeró Range. The map also shows several abandoned villages that lie at mid range. Finally, the third item included is the numerous churches of the area. Some, are still used, most are not. In any case, this map that does not include all the isolated farms of the slopes portrays a landscape in which every corner of the valley and the mountains is socialized and intensively used.

Figure 1.

The second map illustrates the most salient social features of the landscape at the beginning of the twenty first century. The scattered but omnipresent local social activity of the mountains has been replaced by protected areas, ski resorts and museums. The valley has been reconfigured to offer goods and services to visitors.

Figure 2.

In the Pallars Sobirà the disbanding of villages following the initial modernization of the municipal structure of the Spanish state is even more striking. After 1842 at least thirty communities disappear from the official censuses. This 'mortality' can be only compared with the disappearances due to the acceleration of the depopulation during the decade of the 1970s with sixteen losses. In the year 2005 the Pallars Sobira has only 15 municipalities. The historical records of the last one hundred and fifty years, thus, talk about 108 villages and hamlets disappearing from the official censuses. Just a handful of them are still occupied (fig.3).

Figure 3.

The Berguedà and the Pallars Sobirà represent the two extremes of the historical changes suffered by the Pyrenees. The former, or at least significant areas of it, was integrated into the industrial networks dominating the rest of the country. The latter, remained on the periphery, isolated, and the main changes swiping across its valleys were focused on significant population losses in favor of the lowlands. In the Pallars Sobirà, lacking its own industrialization process these losses started as soon as the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The industry of the Berguedà slowed down the process of depopulation, in absolute terms, until the 1960s. There was no industrialization in the Pallars Sobirà, and the hydropower plants arrived there in a later period. The first dams are built during the 1950s. Although the dams brought jobs for a little while, during the

construction period, it was a mirage that quickly vanished once the dams and the hydropower plants were finished (Boneta 2003; Tarraubella 1990).

Catalonia during the late nineteenth century and, especially, at the beginning of the twentieth century around the low lands of Barcelona, the Vallès District, and along the Llobregat River[8], became a stronghold of industrialism, with a powerful and competitive textile sector (Thomson 1992). This fact had two important consequences in the northern mountains. Some areas such as the High Berguedà took advantage of the abundance of raw material and the presence of a qualified workforce, and started their own process of industrialization founded in textile factories. The entire range became a source of energy. Some areas had coal, but what they mostly had was steep gradients and lots of water. In other words, these mountains had potential for generating hydropower in a region of the world jumping at full speed onto the industrialization wagon and where other energetic sources were scarce or nonexistent.

These intense economic transformations had dramatic consequences on the demography and life of mountain populations. All the sudden the villages at the bottom of the valleys were concentrating a disproportionate amount of quality services and infrastructures, offered large amounts of jobs with salaries, and modern, at the time, housing.

Concurrently the state issued the next two waves of territorialization policies: the disentailment campaigns (1850-1900), and the expropriation campaign lead by the forest engineer corps (1900-1960)[9]. This is not the place for a detailed explanation of the scope and nature of both campaigns; suffice to say that they translated into large patches of territory being appropriated by the State. In the first case, the disentailment campaign, the

---

[8] The Valley of Lillet, by the way, is the headwater of the Llobregat River.

[9] To see more about the local consequences of such policies see Gomez (1992) and Vaccaro (2005)

expropriations attempted to introduce theoretically non-productive lands into the real state market. Common property, abundant at the time in the Pyrenees was especially targeted. Non-private forms of property, at the eyes of the nineteenth century liberals, were inefficient. In the second case the corps of engineers was given the authority to decide about condition of the land. It was a time in which dozens if not hundreds of water reservoirs were being built downstream and there was a lot of preoccupation about deforestation and erosion affecting the reservoirs efficiency. Following the recommendations of the forest engineers, thousands of hectares were expropriated. Traditional uses of the landscape were considered harmful and generators of erosion. The confiscated land from then on was enclosed, kept, and managed by governmental institutions. The people that had lived and worked on farms at the expropriated patches had to relocate. The collective inertia, the absence of other available farms, or the lack of resources to manage propelled the displaced populations to the valley towns.

Gradually the slopes started to depopulate. Some villagers relocated because of the attraction power of the reemerging towns. Some relocated because the dwindling population of the ranches did not offer a viable critical mass for a healthy community anymore. The region, in absolute terms, did not lose population. On the contrary, the valleys in the process of industrialization received influxes of workers from the Catalan lowlands and beyond.

The decline of the Catalan textile industry, incapable of competing with Morocco or Far East's low cost production, the replacement of hydropower by oil or nuclear generated power, the closure of the mines overpowered by South Africa's coal, and the 1970s global oil crises annihilated most of the industrial possibilities of the Pyrenees and large parts of the Western inlands. Globalization and its low shipping costs nullified every single productive advantage that the mountain communities could have ever had.

Suddenly, the already precarious Pyrenean job market crashed. The industrialized areas of the Pyrenees joined the depopulation trend that its marginal areas had started fifty years before. This time the migration did not stop at the towns and villages of the bottom of the valleys. People pushed forward to the urban areas. The area experienced an acute process of depopulation and aging. Figure 4 illustrates the demographic trends described above.

Figure 4.

These socioeconomic convulsions were not inconsequential to the environment of the Catalan mountains. Today, the old agricultural terraces still climb impossible slopes but not much is cultivated on them. The terraces are silent evidence of an era in which these mountains were densely inhabited and where agriculture and ranching were the main productive activities. These terraces penetrate deep into the forest. In other words, these forests were not present when these mountains were a functional agrarian landscape.

This widespread but low-intensity key anthropogenic influence on the ecology of the area was completely transformed by the irruption of industrialization. Open air mines, trains, and dams dumped tons of concrete and pollution in these valleys. The impact of human economic activities jumped to a new level.

At the same time the depopulation trend that, during the industrial era started at the higher parts of the ranges but that spread down during the deindustrialization, resulted in a reduction of human pressure over the environment. The forest started to recolonize long-abandoned fields, and charismatic species, due to natural processes or to reintroduction, returned to the mountains.

This situation prepared the stage for the next economic transformation of these mountains. The postindustrial Pyrenees are characterized by low densities, communities mainly concentrated in villages, mountains mainly devoid of permanent inhabitants, and exuberant and growing forests. These new characteristics attracted a new wave of territorialization policies. The fourth wave since the beginning of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the modern Spanish state: the generalized implementation of conservation areas. We are talking about a region where the depopulation and the reduction of productive human pressure that it entails has allowed nature to recover or change, where the depopulation and the lack of alternatives guarantees low levels of social resistance and where the past territorialization policies perpetrated by the state have resulted in large pools of public land that can and have acted as territorial foundations of these policies.

The same characteristics facilitated the arrival of ski resorts. The survival of large tracks of communal or municipal land in the slopes seems to have made possible the consolidation of these large projects. The process of depopulation of the high valleys has resulted also in the drastic reduction of commoners. Due to the low number of owners current decision-making process in communal areas closely resembles to private property. Land speculation on the account of the potential and highly rewarding new uses has become a common activity for commoners, local councils and local and external investors. The extreme atomization of private property characteristic of the agricultural low lands would have been a significant obstacle to any project requiring the acquiescence of numerous owners.

Adventure, and ski tourism have resulted in a social revival of many of these areas. The relative demographic recovery observed for the last ten years in some of the Pyrenean

districts can be related to this economic transformation[10]. The service industry generates

significant revenue in terms of wages and benefits from land speculation. It is questionable

however, if the economic benefits are fairly distributed across the mountain communities,

and if they compensate for long-term damages to the social and ecological fabric. Local

communities are far from homogeneous in their approach to these particular economic

opportunities. Tourism activities depend to a large extent on alliances with external sources

of funding and public institutions (Haenn 2005; Hall 1994; Lindberg and Enriquez 1994).

Some communities have successfully maintained complete control of the emerging tourism

industry[11], while urban-based corporations have come to dominate this form of development

in other areas. Still other valleys remain largely unexploited.

History has always been about fluxes. There is not, and there never was an idyllic

Pyrenean landscape exclusively characterized by isolation, harmony, and complete self-

sufficiency. However, in the globalized urban era the patterns of production, marketing, and

consumption have emerged in tight association with the infrastructure networks that canalize

the demographic, informational, and material fluxes that feed the cities in a daily basis.

It was the emergence of these networks that destroyed every possible competitive

advantage of mountain industrialization. The early industrialization process did affect the

inland mountains. The relationship between mountains and cities was marked by extractive

practices. The engineers of relatively new technical universities were sent all over the

countryside to identify sources of natural resources susceptible to nourish the progress of

the industrial revolution. As mentioned earlier, the Pyrenees provided coal and hydropower

for this process. Coal extraction and hydropower resulted on high-impact infrastructures

---

[10] See figure 4.

[11] In the places where locals have succeeded in controlling development, internal conflict has emerged as benefits are never equally shared across the community.

distorting the traditional mountainous landscape. This extractive process can also be described in terms of unilineal fluxes of matter and energy from the countryside to the cities. The essential separation, however, remained. The urban society constructed outposts in the higher valleys of the High Pyrenees in order to extract the energy for fuel. Citizens and factories in the lowlands consumed this flux of energy without entering in direct contact with the source. The consumption process, thus, affected raw or transformed materials transported to the lowlands.

This transformation did not leave the social fabric of mountains and valleys indifferent. The construction of infrastructures, the monetization of economy and the opening of jobs, concentrated the population of the area in the towns of the valleys, it transformed their productive identity by starting the process of proletarianization of the mountain populations. It created incentives for a directed demographic flux that emptied the slopes. Voided of social pressure the forest started to claim fields and terraces.

The postmaterialistic transformation of the Pyrenees that occurred in the last thirty years has changed this relationship between mountains and cities. The implementation of protected areas and ski resorts affects space more than specific resources. It consequently resulted in territorial appropriation and urbanization of the landscape for consumptive purposes. Public and private initiatives compete for the best areas of the mountains. The goal may be conservation or speculation, but in both cases territory is set apart for new uses and local development ensues. The newly perceived beauty of the High Pyrenees, combined with the improvement of infrastructures and the creation of tourist attractions such as parks and ski resorts, has resulted on a spectacular development of the processes of urbanization of the territory (table 2.).

Table 2.

New residences are built and old ones are refurbished to provide secondary homes to city dwellers. These homes, used during weekends or short periods during the summer holidays, remain empty throughout most of the year. In some cases, small villages become ghost communities for all but a few months of the year. For instance, Aineto, a little village of around twenty houses, has only two houses that are permanently occupied. Residents have moved the village party from the traditional date in September to an alternative time during August, the only moment of the year when the village has enough people to celebrate. On the other hand, apartment buildings surround towns such as Sort or Esterri d'Aneu. These nucleuses are developing their own urban sprawl. The apartments, however, remain closed most of the year.

The territory was literally dumped into the market where it has to compete with other areas offering the same product: leisure. This process of commoditization depends on the virtual insertion of the marketed rural areas into the urban imaginary through publicity and media (information bytes). Values and attractiveness are convened through images and words in schools, TV programs, and media in general. The territory becomes, so to speak, a flow of information that connects product and potential consumers.

The next step is composed of seasonal flows of urban consumers temporarily visiting the area. The consumption of the rural space is then, the result of a double and opposite, flow: information and people. Although the increase of tourism industry has provided an increase of local jobs that have helped to keep some youth in the area, second home owners, skiers, and tourists in general, do not contribute in a regular basis to reanimate the social vitality of the local communities. Small villages dominated by the second

residences phenomenon are empty during most of the week or even the year. Second residence owners do not contribute to the demographic potential or the daily social life of these villages, which are mainly characterized by empty houses and an aging population (Butler 1994).

In addition, the implementation and management of protected areas and ski resorts cannot happen without the investment of large amounts of money. This money, in general, does not come from local sources. So, this reterritorialization cannot start without significant influxes of cash. This 'investment dependence' results also in a certain local disempowerment.

In sum, it has always been about fluxes but the postindustrial mountains present a differential element. This distinction is mainly about the type of relationship that links lowlands and mountains. Nowadays this relationship is based on territorial appropriation and transformation. It is not about isolated extraction operations anymore but about urbanization.

Patrimonialization and consumption

History proves, then, that it has always been about fluxes. Natural resources have been historically exploited at intense degrees. Nowadays, however, the differences reside on the conditions of use and the intensity and range of flow circulation. Space is radically reinvented to become natural patrimony or space for leisure. These new uses translate into the symbolic, economic and juridical re-qualification of the territory.

Interestingly enough, these new uses imply a specific type of non-local actors. Conservation policies, generally, are declared and sustained by the state. Ski resorts, with their enormous initial investments are usually out of local communities' possibilities. Ski

resorts, consequently, imply the disembarkment of some type of corporation or consortium. Ski resorts however, tend to search for and work with local alliances with some sort of local elites. In both cases, then, we are talking about space being appropriated by large external institutions.

These appropriations are directed at securing important resources: singular nature and potential for leisure. It can be argued that the motivation behind the two types of appropriation is radically distinct. Conservation policies are designed to protect biodiversity, while ski resorts are designed to make money. Furthermore, ski resorts, collaterally, degrade biodiversity. They share, nonetheless, a few common traits. One, they require large amount of space. Second, they are designed and managed by external institutions. Third, local traditional uses are excluded, or tightly regulated. Fourth, they imply substantial alterations of the property regimes in place. Fifth, the potential consumers, as skiers or visitors, are mostly outsiders. And finally, in both cases nature is commoditized as a place of fun or as natural patrimony.

Conservation areas are more than ecological necessities. They are political processes of appropriation of territory and resources. And they are also scientific experiments of ecological engineering. In making this point it is not our intention to deny the need of conservation policies. We want to highlight its 'other' aspects.

The creation of a park or a reserve entails the creation of new limits, of new jurisdictional lines over the territory. The area circumscribed by these lines is immediately transformed. The rights and duties associated with ownership are altered by the new regulations associated to the new jurisdictions. This is, then, a political process (Anderson and Grove 1987; Stonich 2000).

A protected area is a political process that either tries to protect a specific type of environment or to restore another. Nature, however, is in permanent dynamic, not-stable change (Abel and Stepp 2003; Scoones 1999). Conservation, in many cases, requires then to freeze an ecological situation or to transform another. In both cases we are talking about ecological engineering.

In a protected area of the Catalan Pyrenees, the management decides to exterminate the wild goat, introduced by accident and sport hunting purposes thirty years ago. It may compete with local species. The marmot (*Marmota marmota*), also a foreign species recently settled in the Pyrenees is allowed to thrive because it fills a theoretically unused niche in the area. The same management team reinforces the previous, also accidental and also for hunting purposes, introduction of red deer with new releases. The explanation is simple. Historically, red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) was present in the area a couple of centuries ago.

All these examples of ecosystem manipulation are real, and they are not related here as aberrations. They represent legitimate choices taken by conservation policies managers. These examples are here to illustrate the ecological malleability of any given landscape. It is hard, if not impossible, to agree on which is the perfect status of a set of ecosystems. Do we want as many charismatic species as possible? Do we want the carnivores too? Which period of the historical ecology of an area is the most desirable to recreate? Is the most desirable period, in terms of biodiversity richness, compatible with the current degree of human occupation and human use of the landscape?

All the previous examples of ecological design choices and all preceding questions are directing us to a specific point. Protected areas are examples of ecological engineering. This point does not subtract value to their existence and activities, but it identifies one of

their main characteristics. Their goal is to manage, intervene, and change if necessary, a landscape.

To proceed to an effective management of the landscape under their jurisdiction it is necessary a quantification of the resources and an assessment of their localization. To maintain a landscape protected is to keep it stable in a desirable condition. This need to freeze the ecological situation of a landscape, combined with the obligation of parks, as public policies, to divulgate, to communicate with their constituency, points to the concept of 'museization'. Protected areas protect collective natural patrimony and this heritage is displayed to visitors. Nature is translated into brochures, guided hikes, or exhibitions. Nature is translated into culture and communicated via pedagogical tools perfected in museums. Nature, in other words, is managed at several levels. Protected areas, like museums, display culture and patrimony to societies (Honey 1999; King and Steward 1996; Whelan 1991). Ecotourism emerges as a developmental tool that may provide legitimacy to the conservation process (Danby 1996; Bo 1990; Haenn 2005).

These open air museums occupying the top of the ranges have their counterparts at the bottom of the valleys. It is there, at the towns, where one encounters cultural museums. These cultural museums display the traditional and not so traditional ways of life for the visitor. Tools, clothes, housing, habits, and traditions are gathered and explained for the visitors. In general they depict an ideal image of a specific type of individual: herders, miners, rafters, and so on (Cohen 1988; Harkin 1995). Daily life and tradition then are integrated as patrimony into another museistic institution. A coherent and, in general, homogenizing version of the past is constructed and communicated to the tourists (Howell 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). This process of reconstructing and reenacting the past, both real and imagined, often places limits on local behavior and agency. Local councils, for

instance, issue building regulations that force new construction to follow so-called traditional styles. Locals have to negotiate new regulations that attempt to harmonize culture, nature and tourism. Villages are supposed to look traditional and clean at the same time. This is not an easy endeavor when the traditional economy is based on herding and agriculture. Interestingly enough, those that practice traditional activities are more often than not at odds with 'traditionalizing' measures, which are meant to attract tourists and are encouraged by those locals that depend on tourism, not on traditional activities. The versions of history explained in local museums are also the result of political tensions and, ultimately, a compromise between historians, anthropologists (often folklorists), local communities, ideals, and marketing needs (Dicks 1999; Prats 1997). These versions of history, nature and culture are the result of older and contemporary political negotiations between romantic views, economic rationales, local realities, and institutional and individual dynamics (Brown 1995; Darby 200; Nogué and Vicente 2004; Urry 1990). This version necessarily includes detailed explanations of the interactions between traditional societies and territory. In agricultural, pastoral, or extractive societies human activities have obvious and direct anthropogenic effects on the territory. The environmental history of the Mediterranean mountains presents numerous examples of these anthropogenic activities (Grove and Rackham 2001; McNeill 1992). The territory becomes a landscape by virtue of the social inscriptions that result from human activities. These activities depict societies intensively attached to the local territory and nature. This fact, in contraposition to our dehumanized and denaturalized mall societies, paves the way for a naturalization of the traditional societies. The organic food movement, for instance, often relies on the purity of the old ways and its traditional practices to justify the superiority of their products and, ultimately, their way of life. Way of life that, often, mimics an idealized version of the old ways.

Nature and culture become one at several levels. First, they are unified by their integration as necessary halves of a whole called landscape. Second, both of them achieve a historical legitimacy that turns nature into part of our culture, and traditional culture into part of our natural roots. And third, as a consequence of this historical legitimacy, both become collective heritage and, consequently, they get protected via museums and conservation policies. Nature is also harnessed by the ski resorts expansion in order to provide leisure (the culture of leisure). The three of them offer a product that the larger national society of consumers considers valuable and eager to purchase (Crandall 1980; Urry 1990).

These valleys, somehow, become leisure thematic parks. Their natures and their cultures are integrated by this process of museization of natural and cultural values, and of naturalization of so-called traditional culture. The places themselves, the valleys, become patrimony. Lets not forget, for instance than the Valley of Boi (Alta Ribagorça) has been declared, in its entirety, a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. What are its values but a combination of dramatic nature, picturesque villages, impressive Romanic churches and old traditions.

Culture however is hard to sell during the long, cold, and snowy winter of these mountains. Leisure and culture interchange predominance seasonally. We, urban dwellers go up there, to the mountains, in winter or summer, to ski, watch "untamed nature", or to smell cultural history. Significant parts of the public budgets allocated to those areas are supposed to keep access to the resorts, or the infrastructure of the parks functional. In other words, significant parts of the budgets allocated to those areas maintain those elements used by the seasonal waves of visitors.

Hyper-modern place attachments

This article focuses on the analysis of the restructuration of the territory and its natural resources through public policies and private commercial initiatives. It can be argued, rightfully so, that this type of analysis emphasizes structural patterns. We must be careful, however, not to ignore or mischaracterize local agency associated to the studied process.

Locals are far from passive subjects of history, they resisted, fostered, and took advantage of each one of the changes that effected valleys and mountains of the Pyrenees across history. Their actions and activities can be read in terms of strategies. It is from this perspective that we need to understand the local imbrications of these political and economic processes. After the industrial collapse while enduring and atrocious demographic crises, most local elites understood the new position of the Pyrenees in the national and global economic system. Locals, especially local politicians, realized that they had been displaced to the interior periphery and that, in order to recover significance, they had to reinvent themselves. The goal was to identify new products attractive enough to the urban market to pull its attention, once again, to the mountains.

Parks, resorts and museums are the result of a complex and multilayered process simultaneously fostered by external and local initiatives. The mountain communities are not homogeneous entities. They have also high internal diversity. Inside the villages at least two models of development can be perceived, cohabitating in precarious equilibrium. On the one hand we encounter those that foster urbanization and territorial speculation based on mass tourism and ski resorts. On the other hand, there are other groups that attempt to create sustainable processes of development based on small-scale cultural and ecological tourism. These two trends have split entire communities and, interestingly enough, they have

branched out of the communities when these groups, to establish regional alliances, have positioned themselves in different camps of the national political parties' divide.

Both camps have something in common. Their strategies are directed at connecting with wider networks and eventually to tap resources from them. The commoditization of nature for leisure purposes is an obvious instance of this strategy. The patrimonialization of traditions such as food, ceremonies, or markets is a more subtle example. Museization is often considered an appropriation and manipulation of a local identity. In many cases however, this museization is fostered from local grounds to generate yet another tourist attraction (Frigolé 2005; Prats 1997). Local culinary products such as cheeses, various types of treated meats, alcohol, fruits and vegetables have also been recovered, and these items are featured prominently in restaurants, hotels, and grocery shops all over the area. Their value as 'natural' or 'traditional' products, translated into higher selling prices. These small-scale industries are mainly local, and they take advantage of this contemporary taste for non-industrialized foods. Food becomes an identity marker with significant economic consequences, as well as an element that connects these localities with globalized values (Heller 2006).

The discussion about local agency has also to include another important element. All the economic transformations described above have not resulted in the total eradication of economic activities from previous productive modes. In other words, these mountains are still crossed by dozens, if not hundreds, of transhumant herds. Many hydropower plants and its dams are still in operation. There are still, here and there, a few factories and a few mines functioning.

In most cases the survival of these activities is not due to a 'revival obsession'. Sheepherders, for instance, are still roaming around these mountains because at some level it

still makes economic sense[12]. Local strategies have been influenced by economic gains and availability of ecological and social possibilities. The patrimonialization is a fact, which does not mean, however, that it has wiped out every other economic activity.

Patrimonialization depends on carefully constructed idealizations of the natural and cultural past. Ironically, farmers and ranchers, with genealogies of century old occupation, do not necessarily share these imaginaries. They, more often than not, disagree with the reintroduction of species. They do not like ungulates because they interfere with the grazing seasonal circulation. But they specially do not like the reintroduction of predators such bears or wolves: species their grandparents helped to remove. Contemporary herders do not necessarily fit either with the image built of them in museums.

The new economic paradigm is designed to provide services to visitors. Obviously, while doing so it generates jobs and revenues for locals but a fact remain. The collective productive identity depends on the influx of waves of seasonal strangers.

In anthropology, traditionally, attachment to place has been explained by exploring the deep ties between communities and their environments (Feld and Basso 1996; Strang 1997). This approach with old precedents in the social sciences has been instrumental in the description of detailed and accurate ways of understanding, classifying and using the environment[13]. Cultural ecologists, ethnobiologists, and landscape analysts have greatly contributed to the documentation of this locally contextualized form of knowledge. In the

---

[12] Agrarian censuses seem to point out less numerous but larger herds. The depopulation of the area eliminated some level of competition. The EU subventions are an important element of this economic and social equation.

[13] One of the main criticisms that afflicted anthropology from the very beginning and at least until the structural-functionalists was its emphasis on isolated communities.

hyper-modern era place attachment cannot be understood without multiscalar analysis (Appadurai 1996; Paulson and Gezon 2005). Although people from the Pyrenees do have a deep knowledge of their territory and a profound connection with the environment, it is important not to essentialize local communities. Massive waves of emigration have left many communities in a weakened demographic state, with aging populations and little productive capacity. In addition, generational fractures are also very present in these communities. New occupations require new knowledge and skills not necessarily associated with a deep understanding of the environment. In other words, an intense sense of place did not stop the community from disaggregating under economic pressures.

In these mountains connectivity has been an important factor, at least, since the Middle Ages. Caravans charging wool connected their local markets with those of the towns in the Languedoc and central Catalonia (Le Roy Ladurie 1982). The industrialization connected them with the industrialized cities and a new way of life. The industrial collapse connected, in an intangible way, the Catalan mountains to Morocco, South Africa and so on. Globalization, thus, turned these mountains in just another node of a global economic system. Consequently, in the name of efficiency and profitability, the economic grid got rearranged and the Western mountains were dropped into a peripheral state.

The development of a new set of commodities, covering a new set of needs relocated, once again, these mountains in the global network. Leisure, nature and culture resituated this region in a more central position in the collective imaginary and the economic and demographic fluxes of the contemporary Spanish society.

The hyper-mobility dominating the current global economic system forces us to discuss place attachment as a succession of connections at different geographical and cultural scales that have an impact on the construction of individual and collective identity.

Identity, as a consequence, is not exclusively the result of local arrangements. The position of these communities in relation to the larger national and international societies is as important as their own internal dynamics. In this hyper-modern era these villages are providing nature, leisure and tradition. Therefore, the expectations of tradition generated by the historically peripheral position of these communities in the global society have an impact of how their inhabitants construct themselves, and how they present themselves.

Bibliography

Abel T. and Stepp J.R, 2003. "A new ecosystems ecology for anthropology" *Conservation Ecology* **7**(3) 12 [outline]

Agrawal A. and Sivaramakrishnan K. Eds, 2003. *Regional Modernities: the cultural politics of development in India* (Oxford University Press, Oxford)

Appadurai A, 1996. *Modernity at Large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis)

Anderson B, 1991. *Imagined Communities* (Verso, London)

Anderson, D. and Grove, R. (eds.) 1987. *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies, and Practice* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)

Bandy J, 1996. "Managing the Other of Nature: Sustainability, Spectacle, and Global Regimes of Capital in Ecotourism" *Public Culture* 8 539-566.

Boo E, 1990. *Ecotourism: The Potentials and Pitfalls* 2 vols. (World Wildlife Fund, Washington DC)

Boneta M, 2003. *La Vall Fosca: els llacs de la llum. Desenvolupament socioeconomic a comencament del segle XX* (Garsineu Edicions, Tremp)

Böröcz J, 1996. *Leisure Migration: A Sociological study of Tourism* (Pergamon, New York)

Braun B, 2002. *The Intemperate Forest: nature, culture and power in Canada's West coast* (Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis)

Brown D, 1995. *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC)

Butler R, 1994. "Seasonality in Tourism: Issues and Problems" In *Tourism: The State of the Art*. A. Seaton, ed. 332-339 (Wiley, Chichester, England)

Campillo X. and Font X, 2004. *Avaluació de la sostenibilitat del turisme a l'Alt Pirineu i Aran* (Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona)

Castells M, 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society* (Blackwell, Malden, MA)

Cohen E, 1988. "Authenticity and commodification in tourism" *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 371-386

Crandall R, 1980. "Motivations for leisure" *Leisure Research* 12 45-54

Cross G, 1993. *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (Routledge, London)

Darby W, 2000. *Landscape and Identity: geographies of nation and class in England* (Berg, Oxford)

Dicks B. 1999. "The View of our Town from the Hill: communities on display as local heritage" *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, **2**(3) 349-368

Feld S. and Basso K. Eds, 1996. *Sense of Place* (School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, N.M.)

Frigolé J, 2005. *Les Trementinaires* (IPEC, Barcelona)

Gómez J, 1992. *Ciencia y política de los montes españoles (1848-1936)* (ICONA, Madrid)

Grove A.T. and Rackham O, 2001. *The Nature of Mediterranean Europe: an ecological history* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London)

Haenn N, 2005. *Fields of Power, Forests Of Discontent: Culture, Conservation, and the State in Mexico* (Arizona University Press, Tucson)

Hall C, 1994. *Tourism and Politics: policy, power and place* (Wiley, West Sussex)

Hannah M, 2000. *Governmentality and the Mastery of the Territory in Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)

Harkin M, 1995. "Modernist anthropology and tourism of the authentic" *Annals of Tourism Research* 25 650-670

Heller Ch, 2006. "Post-Industrial 'Quality Agricultural Discourse': Techniques of Governance and Resistance in the French Debate over GM Crops" *Journal of Social Anthropology* (in press).

Honey M, 1999. *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who owns paradise?* (Island, Washington DC)

Howell BJ, 1994. "Weighing the risks and rewards of involvement in cultural conservation and heritage tourism" *Human Organization* 53 150-159

Inglehart R, 1997. *Modernization and postmodernization: cultural, economic and political change in 43 societies* (Princeton University Press, Princeton)

King D. and Steward W, 1996. "Ecotourism and commodification: protecting people and places" *Biodiversity Conservation* 5 293-305

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett B, 1998. *Destination Culture: tourism, museums and heritage* (University of California Press, Berkeley)

LeRoy Ladurie E, 1982. *Mountaillou, the promised land of error* (Vintage Books, New York)

Lindberg K. and Enriquez J, 1994. *An analysis of ecotourism's economic contribution to sustainable development* (World Resources Institute, Washington DC)

McNeill J, 1992. *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, University Cambridge) Press

Nogué J., and Vicente J, 2004. "Landscape and national identity in Catalonia" *Political Geography* 23 113-32.

Paulson S. and Gezon L. Eds, 2005. *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Societal Groups* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick)

Peluso N. and Vandergeist P, 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand" *Journal of Asian Studies* **61** 761-812.

Prats Ll, 1997. *Antropología y patrimonio* (Ariel, Barcelona)

Sabartés J, 1993. *L'Èxode Pallarès: crisi demogràfica i devallada poblacional als Pallars i l'Alta Ribagorça (1857-1991)* (Garsineu Edicions, Tremp)

Scoones I, 1999. "New ecology and the social sciences: what prospects for a fruitful engagement?" *Annual Review of Anthropology* **28** 479-507

Seaton A. Ed, 1994. *Tourism: The State of the Art* (Wiley, Chichester, England)

Stonich SC, 2000. *The Other Side of Paradise: tourism, conservation, and development in the Bay Islands* (Cognizant Common Corp., New York)

Strang V, 1997. *Uncommon ground: cultural landscapes and environmental values* (Berg, Oxford)

Tarraubella X, 1990. *La Canadenca al Pallars* (Garsineu Edicions, Tremp)

Thomson J, 1992. *A distinctive industrialization: cotton in Barcelona 1728-1832* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)

Tsing A, 2004. *Friction: an ethnography of global connection* (Princeton University Press, Princeton)

Urry J, 1990. *The Tourist Gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies* (Sage, London)

Vaccaro I, 2005. "Property mosaic and state-making: governmentality, expropriation and conservation in the Pyrenees" *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* **9** 4-19

Valdéz, M. Ed, 2004. *Naturaleza y Valor: una aproximación a la ética ambiental* (UNAM y Fondo de Cultura Económica, México)

Whelan T, (ed.) 1991. *Nature Tourism: managing for the environment* (Island, Washington DC)