

## **Public Grants to Implement Public Folklore for Tourists?**

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**Abstract** In the last twenty years, a policy of institutional sponsorship in Abruzzo (Central Italy) has been financing new bombastic and commercial displays of public folklore, without clear principles regarding folklore in Abruzzo as a whole. In fact, institutions do not promote sponsorships with specific objectives such as ethical or environmental protection or social inclusion. As a result, sponsorships are awarded without any consistency, but simply because local tradition and public entertainment attract tourists. Of course, this local and institutional public folklore experience has now encouraged folk tradition’s old romantic metaphor of being an unchangeable, organic and inviolable body, which has become a defence mechanism against cultural creativity and diversity. Therefore, in 2015 the author, together with other scholars, requested an ICH regional law with a regional ICH register and ethical guidelines for communities and operators. To date (2017) the law is not yet in force and local communities are still left with uncoordinated public folklore experiences, which in some cases is of course ethical and sustainable. This feedback from the region demonstrates that policy-makers should not hesitate to finalize grants and awards that enable the alignment of public folklore with ICH ethics. Today, more than ever, scholars, stake-holders, cultural brokers and institutions should work together to facilitate the social use of ethnography, which is the primary objective of scientific reflection on cultural diversity and folklore.

**Summary** 1 Cultural Change in Abruzzo and the Scientific Inquiry on the Misfit Heritage. – 2 Cocullo as a Good Safeguard: Its Reflexive Attitude Regarding Public Folklore. – 3 Far from the Educational Aims: Spectacularization and Commercialization in Public Folklore. – 4 The Dilemmas about an ICH Regional Law.

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### **1 Cultural Change in Abruzzo and the Scientific Inquiry on the *Misfit Heritage***

Abruzzo is a mountainous and hilly region: the plain is only a narrow coastal strip. From the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, hundreds of mountain villages thrived on agriculture, sheep-farming, hunting and gathering. It took only a century, the twentieth century, to drastically decrease the population in the mountain villages which have now returned to the wilderness, because of a dramatic local economic crisis and the mas-

sive, resultant migration.<sup>1</sup> Also in Abruzzo, National Plans for Development of the South (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno) created great industries in the lowlands, huge urbanization of the coastal areas and loss of economies in mountainous areas. Economies based on reciprocity and on local solidarity rapidly turned into advanced capitalist economies. It was economic colonialism that created social and cultural problems.<sup>2</sup>

Being a native anthropologist, I have observed this cultural change in Abruzzo, where I live and work. In the early '70s, the villages were still a type of cultural production and consumer unit. Later on, social pressures from industrialization on the one hand, and migration to metropolitan areas on the other hand, definitively changed cultural patterns and the circulation of money. This economic phenomenon reduced solidarity and unleashed conflict in villages. In other words, the working class accepted the convenience of modernization, without openly letting go of its prejudices, superstitions, cultural dependency or subordination (Gramsci 1966).

The rural mechanisms of solidarity and reciprocity survived but only in symbolic form through public expressions of folklore (E. Giancristofaro 1978). The transition from an autocratic economy of subsistence, to an artificial economy was so quick that the working class was easily trapped into new forms of cultural dependency. The comfortable adoption of cultural forms inspired by the recent past (like the nostalgic image of a picturesque and genuine 'village life') expanded across new urban classes like a 'sense of guilt' because of this unexpected economic growth. The adoption of laical rituals inspired by the distant past (like the prestigious image of the 'medieval history' of local towns) expanded across new urban classes like the new 'popular identity'.

In the '60s, '70s and early '80s, several scholars led by Alfonso Di Nola and Alberto Cirese thoroughly inventoried oral heritage in Abruzzo villages. These surveys interpreted the popular trend of keeping the "misfit and magic expressions" as a popular tactic to combat the alienation brought on by new patterns of money and migration (De Martino 1959, 1978; Cirese 1973; Di Nola 1976). This approach was unpopular; that means it has involved only the villages, and did not receive an endorsement from the political level, who was eager to erase the peasant memories. Anyway,

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1 Since 1861 (date of the unification of Italy), more than 1,300,000 residents left the region, because of their poverty and exploitation by the owners of the lands. This loss created a cultural shock in villages (Spedicato, L. Giancristofaro 2010).

2 After WWII, workers moved especially to the coastal towns of Abruzzo, and a new coastal city, Pescara, in few years exceeded 100,000 inhabitants. Several coastal cities increased to 50,000 inhabitants (Montesilvano, Chieti, Vasto); to 30,000 inhabitants (Lanciano, Roseto, Francavilla, Giulianova); to 25,000 inhabitants (Ortona, San Salvo, Spoltore). Conversely, tens of villages in the mountains went from 3,000 inhabitants each, to 100 people mostly old and retired, therefore many villages today do not have basic community facilities (a grocery, a pharmacy, a primary school, a bakery, a fuel supplier).

public inventories were encouraged by scholars and recorded by local and collective participants (publishers, local committees,<sup>3</sup> district authorities, amateur historians). In several villages, the local ethnographers utilized a sort of participatory research process, a grassroots reflection of their own 'misfit status' in a rapidly changing world. The ethnography analysed local events that were essentially the old religious festivals. In public and passionate talks, scholars suggested to the communities that they should not be ashamed but should consider their folklore as an important survivor of economic production. The scholars also recommended that they should not replace folklore with consumerism or with the new trend of a popular disguise inspired by a frustrated nostalgia of the past. Scholars thus invited the communities to recognize their 'misfit heritage' as the social consciousness of sustainability and local solidarity that were overcome by capitalism and by its new culture of material comfort (Di Nola 1976; E. Giancristofaro 1978). In addition, from the '70s to 2010, wide-ranging institutional collections of audiovisual documentation took place in the area. Many ethnological items were recorded by the ICCD, Rome, as a primary collection of cultural items. The institutional inventories are professional and not participative, which means they have no public educational goals (Arantes 2009; Clemente 2014). The selected documents are still stored in paper format in databanks in national and regional record libraries, for professional use. In 2009-2010, the ethnographic data were digitalized into a database managed by the regional government of Abruzzo (Department of Planning, Human Financial and Instrumental Resources), whose search engine was called CADRA. Unfortunately, these search engines are yet to be made available to the public. To confirm, the 'misfit elements' became the public symbol of local resistance in the face of capitalism, consumerism and other elements of mass culture. In any case, this challenging reading of folklore was shared by a limited number of interested persons, and the institutional inventories did not provide a public education for the CH.

In the economic and cultural crisis, the festivals inspired by local memory have increased their function as a magical resource. Since the '90s, the peasant festivals have become a 'symbol of life', because for one day a year, they mean that there are visitors and social life in the mountain villages, a sort of enchantment. The festivals that, in the past, were economical and religious structures, are now the super-structural elements of social memory, less religious than opulent and spectacular, a symbolic function that is implemented through the mass media, *i.e.* the festivals are 'public folklore'. Of course, also in the coastal towns, at the start of the twenty-first century, the festivals mean 'life', because the societies are

3 *I.e.* the Pro Loco, in Latin 'to favour the local place', are associations of volunteers, with aims of local promotion and cultural education

led by the technological race but consumed by a lack of prospects in the 'liquid society' (Appadurai 1996; Bauman 2007).

## 2 Cocollo as a Good Safeguard: Its Reflexive Attitude Regarding Public Folklore

Despite the large celebrations for San Domenico Abate in Cocollo, it is important to note that the current size of the village is only 300 inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> This CH is the main resource for the village, because no other festival in Abruzzo nowadays records this high level of attendance, and the "Cocollo phenomenon" has gone on like this for decades, thanks to the cooperation of devotional communities and of cultural anthropologists. The ritual is truly antique. Since the seventeenth century, the ritual has been based on the coexistence between local people and wild animals that the villagers utilise in the name of San Domenico Abate, on a day dedicated to him during springtime.<sup>5</sup> During the twenty-first century, Domenico lived in Cocollo for many years, helping the local people and performing many miracles (Di Nola 1976). It is said that he could control wolves and snakes, therefore he was recorded as a forerunner of St. Francis of Assisi and he is still beloved also in Pretoro, Villalago, Anversa, Sora, Foligno and other villages on the Appennini mountains. The religious ritual, for educational purposes, acts as a drama to illustrate this kind of 'miracle', *i.e.* the possibility of human salvation also if living through the wildlife. The villagers capture several local non-venomous snakes, and during the festival they put them on the holy statue. After the ritual, the snakes are released into the fields. This ritual is very successful because the snakes seem dangerous but their contact does no harm to anyone, and all this positivity is attributed to the Saint and to the devotion, as a 'religious fiction' (Di Nola 1976, 1982). Year after year, the ritual was thus reproduced because it worked as a public mechanism of reassurance for pastoral and rural populations who inhabited mountains in which one easily comes across poisonous snakes among stones, weeds or stacks of firewood (Di Nola 1976). This cult has a similarity with the Marcopoulos festival of the Virgin of the Snakes (*Panagia Fidoussa*), on the island of Kefalonia (Greece): here, innocuous snakes are taken to the church in bags or jars and deposited in the church near the silver icon

4 Cocollo (AQ) is a little village near to the National Park of Abruzzo. The villagers act out a symbolic ritual with snakes that attracts twenty thousand visitors, on the day dedicated to San Domenico, the 1st of May.

5 The basic elements of the ritual, which are the statue of San Domenico Abate and the snakes, have been documented since the seventeenth century, not before. The hypothesis that the ritual of San Domenico descends directly from the local pagan worship of the Goddess Angitia (III-I century b.C.) is quite unreliable.



Figure 1. 1989. Discussion held by Di Nola and his students with the Cocullo Pro Loco about the meaning of their ritual in the modern world. Cocullo. © Photos by Ireneo Bellotta

of the Virgin, on 14 and 15 August.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, those two festivals could be the remnants of an archaic cult of innocuous snakes in the Mediterranean area, due maybe to the snake's ability to eliminate rats. The use of keeping the innocuous *grass snakes* in the houses is documented in Greek and Roman civilization and a positive idea of snakes still circulates in the peripheral areas of the Mediterranean (Andrianopoulou 2008). The popular traditions such as Marcopoulos and Cocullo are therefore resistant to the Jewish and Christian bias about the snake as the "official body of the devil" (Di Nola 1976).

In modern times, the villagers offer the snakes to the Saint but also to the visitors, giving them the chance to touch the wildlife and to overcome their prejudices around snakes, the historical symbol of the devil and of course the innocent symbol of the human ambitions. So the ritual takes also an ecological and naturalistic significance. The collective overcoming of the 'taboo' is framed by the holiness of the event, which is far from being bigoted and provincial but, rather, is transcultural (Di Nola 1976, 1982; L. Giancristofaro 2015). While in rural society the snake was real and its bite could be fatal, in artificial society the snakes have a symbolic meaning (human suffering in general) and the ritual significance has developed into a sort of ecological protection of snakes and wildlife.

Since the '80s, because of the pre-roman archaeological site not far from Cocullo, some tour operators and travel agents have asked the community

<sup>6</sup> In Cocullo the practice of taking the snakes into the church was stopped in the 1955 because of the bishop's command. Thereafter, the snakes have been put on the San Domenico statue outside the church.

to adapt the annual ritual, wearing new roman historical costumes and replacing the San Domenico Abate statue with the symbols of 'Angitia Goddess of snakes'. With increasing the marketing and the use of the festivals for tourists, the tour operators have even proposed to the Pro Loco and to the city council a "spectacularisation project with folk costumes and folk dance". This would involve selling tickets to touch the snakes and to see the performances, like a "Disneyland of strange traditions". Of course, the Cocullo community refused the 'commercialization' of its festival and intuitively understood the fragility of its heritage in a capitalistic society. Thanks to their friendships with anthropologists such as Alfonso Di Nola, the stake-holders were aware of the meanings of a neoliberal approach into local traditions, commercial sponsorship, and the tourist's impact on heritage. They were aware that the popular need to enjoy the religious festivals 'like a movie' would compromise their values, and have chosen to control the risks of laical drift in popular devotion.

The stake-holders in Cocullo have developed a loyal and open relationship with their heritage: therefore, despite demands to produce a touristic attraction, they did not let the historical suggestions irrationally affect the present. Instead, to satisfy the tour operators, the community expanded the ethical principles of the ritual: simplicity, gratuitousness, inclusive participation and the conservation of nature. The stake-holders refused to be involved in the capitalistic framework, with its deception and advertising to maximize profits. The community wants to keep its cultural expression to be that of freedom, coherency and poverty, based on respect for people and the local environment. The cult is considered as a local resource to 'be human' (Di Nola 1982). Of course, this does not mean purism, because over time the ritual has changed, a new naturalistic tourism is growing around the village and the ritual is broadcast on national and international television, without consumerism or a cheapening of the event.

Once a year, on the 1st of May, this festival in Cocullo celebrates balance and gathers together under the local memory of Domenico, the one who still displays his old know-how about how to solve human problems. Today the 'evil' is the dissolution of societies and local economies, unemployment, cultural addictions, the end of human labour and relationships, ecological catastrophes, earthquakes, but San Domenico Abate taught the Cocullo people to face their problems with passion and courage, and they continue to do so. After the death of Di Nola (1997), the Cocullo people founded the 'Alfonso Di Nola Study Centre on Popular Traditions' and asked the scholars to continue to research how to safeguard the deep meanings of the ritual. Over the past twenty years, 1997 to 2017, the Study Centre has organized many congresses and publications together with Universities, SIMBDEA and UNPLI, collecting local resources, aiming to diffuse ICH ethics and to support the claim that sustainable development must be spread by innovative enterprises in agriculture and crafts.



Figure 2. The *Serpari*, and the devotional medal attesting San Domenico with snakes since the seventeenth century. © Photos by Paolo Gizi

As a result, a strong sense of social responsibility has developed in Cocullo over the years. Since 1998, the community only uses renewable energy, has banned pesticides and invests many resources in environmental activities, honouring its position on the edge of the regional parks. Last but not least, because of the risk of extinction of local reptiles, the *serpari*, together with zoologists, are engaged in a project that safeguards the local snakes. The local *serpari* (snake breeders) share their traditional know-how about the wilderness with the general public, coordinating with wildlife protection laws. In recent decades, climate change, overuse of pesticides and unjustified persecution for symbolic reasons, have dramatically reduced the number of snakes and their biodiversity in the region. Conversely, the number of rats has increased. Therefore, when snakes are captured for the ritual, there is a routine veterinary examination and the information is captured in a census. After the check-up and ritual, the snakes are released into the wild, in exactly in the same place in which they were captured.

In Cocullo, the safeguard process was widely conducted bottom-up, aiming to increase the altruistic sense of responsibility towards the local heritage, mirroring the UNESCO 2003 Convention, in the spirit of the ethical, social, economic and environmental guidelines, but before the

Convention was even conceived. Despite this enlightened commitment, the demographic crisis and the aging of the local population are a huge risk for this CH. Therefore in 2010, after the L'Aquila earthquake, the community asked the Study Center for a 'safeguard plan' based on increasing the sustainable enterprises. In 2015, the stake-holders formalized their network and included several mountain villages (Pretoro, Villalago, Anversa, Sora, Foligno etc.) in a general protection plan of their "religious and environmental know-how", with the objective of their inclusion in the UNESCO USL. However, to realize a protection plan according to the 2003 Convention spirit and ethical guidelines requires much intellectual and relational energy (Lapicciarella 2015). Even if Cocullo is one of the best educational practices in Abruzzo, there are notable difficulties in financing a 'plan for the future' and both stake-holders and professionals are struggling with the scarcity of resources. On the other hand, many big re-enactment and popular festivals in the metropolitan areas are richly financed under the political label of "cultural activities for tourist entertainment", without needing to align with any specific ethical and environmental principles, simply in accordance with the entertainment function of public folklore.

### **3 Far from the Educational Aims: Spectacularization and Commercialization in Public Folklore**

Ethical and environmental issues are considered a priority in the safeguarding of ICH and to new inscriptions and maintenance of the Lists. The operational guidelines on environmental, economic and social issues talk about an "inclusive economic development" but suggest monitoring the impact of tourism, which could have disastrous effects on ICH.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, today in Abruzzo the popular idea of valorizing the traditions is a key element in the construction of local identity (public folklore) and reads the traditions as a commercial factor to attract tourists. As in most of Southern and Central Italy, the traditions are considered a resource "to boost tourism" (Palumbo 2003; Ciminelli 2008; Bortolotto 2010). Except for several communities like Cocullo, the general trend has been not to understand and not to digest the misfit element but has been to defuse the misfit element and to transform it into a comfortable instrument of visual pleasure and laical entertainment. The official policies and media have educated the stake-holders on 'marketability' and pushed the communities "to take a shortcut hoping to get tourists, and the shortcut is to invent some picturesque and opulent costume to give body to the misunderstood local memory" (E. Giancristofaro 1978; Spedicato 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> See the Twelve Ethical Principles for safeguarding ICH (ICSICH, Decision 10.COM 15.a).

This need to be ‘ethnically marketable’ through the act of opulent rituals related to the past started in the main cities, during the ‘80s, when several historical parades were founded to celebrate demographic success, to consecrate commercial leadership and to provide summertime entertainment for residents and visitors. So the policy of laical and historical parades (or re-enactments) started as “the main cultural policy” but required a large amount of funding, even €200,000 per year for each historical parade. Over several decades, this cultural policy has produced a ‘new cultural industry’ in Abruzzo (L. Giancristofaro 2017). Today, the communities perform around 60 annual laical parades in historical dress. These events take place mainly in the summer, often collocated near the old religious festivals to revitalize or replace them. These parades have a ritual format and refer to different historical periods (the Roman era, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Baroque, the Reign of the two Sicily).<sup>8</sup> This ‘virtual past’ flows through tools that do not coincide with the region’s oral memory and do not stimulate a creative and sustainable interpretation of the past.<sup>9</sup> Horse-drawn luxury carriages, robes with ermine garniture, feudal dresses with long trains and crinoline, huge skirts, are rented in every annual parade in need of huge organization to perform in few hours the aesthetic scenes that are standardized in the popular imagination through historical movies.<sup>10</sup> Probably the historical parades aim to formalize the cultural hegemony of the historical residents in front of the newcomers. The parades are run by local associations, which engage the popular actors according to criteria that are useful to the top local families. The notable families of today enact the imaginary notable families of yesterday and through the symbols they legitimize the current hierarchies. So, the notable families act in the parade, while the non-notable families must be only spectators, to better embody this representation of present society. The parades relegate the popular actresses to a decorative role and expel the poverty out from this aesthetic imagination aimed to perform the “beautiful wives of the Middle Ages no-

8 The most important and expensive events are designed to relive the glory of the Middle Ages but a new trend is growing, inspired by the period when the Abruzzi were governed by the Bourbons (before the Unification of Italy). The institutional websites present these new historical re-enactments as “the regional excellence”.

9 The first international opening of the various expressions of oral memory transmission was in the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* (1989). This recommendation was soon superseded by the much more comprehensive and effective tool, which is the ICH paradigm.

10 This new ‘catholic imagination’ about the past, has created a new kind of multiple identity in local actors. Many of them now feel compelled to prove that they are the true descendants of the nobles of the city or they pretend that their family presence in the town dates back to the Middle Ages, or they even boast of keeping in their wardrobe many historical costumes as their personal ‘time machine’ (L. Giancristofaro 2017).

tables” and “the honorable wives of the rich shepherds in the nineteenth century”. This could encourage gender, class and citizenship inequality; however, the agency of these events aims to preserve local power. The parades exclude the newcomers and relegate the participants to the role of passive spectators through the radical differentiation between actors and spectators that is expressed by the new costumes. However, the thrilling rhythm (drums, trumpets, sound of horses, folk dance and music) creates a festive effervescence and the population likes these urban parades (L. Giancristofaro 2006). Of course, this subject should be accompanied by a deeper ethnography on the creative forms of mass consumption that anthropology has wrongly considered non-authentic and anti-cultural, because it is undeniable that the parades and the folk revivals can be heritage (Miller 2008; Heinich 2012), because each community has its own way to produce a public entertainment. The public folklore has today an industrial organization: thanks to considerable finances and political sponsorship, the associations have been transformed into powerful networks and into twinning of parades, to reinforce the sumptuousness of events. However, no resource is committed to a thoughtful and critical path, because the popular entertainment is focused on the visual power and beauty of the show. Indeed, the main aim is to strengthen a political representation at the top of the institutions. The educational, ethic and environmental aims are quite neglected.<sup>11</sup>

At the start of the twenty-first century, the policy of laical and historical parades (or re-enactments) in major cities conditioned and implemented the foundation of new laical re-enactments even in the villages. This quick contamination was enabled by social media, which is a tool through which the smaller communities can control what they do in other villages. Compared to the secular, well organized and lavish parades, the “old and simple religious festivals” seem to be household activities which in the end will disappear altogether from the villages. For example, in villages it has quickly reduced religious festivals and communal meals based on the principle of a fair exchange, and the today’s ‘sagre’ and ‘panarde’ are a merely commercial entertainment for the tourists who pay for the meals and enjoy of waiters in medieval dress (L. Giancristofaro 2017). The local re-enactments using theatrical costumes have increased and need public sponsors to pay for the professionals to implement the ‘marketability’ of the festival, in the “global sell of the ethnicity” (Comaroff 2009).

So, the regional pattern is more and more directed towards a public folklore aimed at making entertainment a weapon of mass distraction. The festivals inspired by the past are now a sort of ‘brand item’ of capi-

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<sup>11</sup> The stake-holders, the local politicians and the communicators often describe these element as UNESCO Living Human Treasures or claim for their candidature in the List of the Masterpieces, even if they do not participate in the ICH programs.

talistic culture. They absorb many public resources, amongst whom are the volunteers in historical research who are considered very important to ensure that performance is 'pure' and adherent to an imaginary past model. The local historical research should instead work for education, for the social awareness and consciousness, but now it aims mostly to reassure the community around "their cultural authenticity"; to sew the magnificent and historical costumes; to explore the possibility of getting some vague 'UNESCO label' to increase the prestige of the local leaders.

Observing both the historical parades and the new folk-revivals, which are a product of industrial mass culture meets local culture, I conclude that the situation will be exacerbated by digital technology. Digital technology is based on the ability to reproduce the temporal spaces in a virtual way, so today a large set of heterogeneous and historical data are also available on screen, maintaining the users in an eternal 'present time'. The users easily lose their diachronic dimension and historical perspective, and even the sense and the meanings of their CH (L. Giancristofaro 2017). Thus, it is not surprising that the communities overthrow their old devotions and obtain public finance for new historical parades. Rather, we should be asking why the institutional funding is so readily available without a pursuit of ethical or environmental aims, and why the institutions do not draw up some rules to apply the paradigm of ICH.

Of course, here it is impossible to give an exhaustive framework of the regional public practices. Anyway, I critically examined the legitimations process through new media and the authorities to represent folk culture, and I see how the ideologies informing these representations are often motivated by a cultural exclusivism (L. Giancristofaro 2017). Except few initiatives, the relationship between public practice and the academy is tenuous, and the cultural operators still lack a basic education in ICH policies and responsibilities. Once the communities become informed and educated, they are quite upset by the institutional and popular interpretation of 'excellence', wrongly excited by magic items that border identity, confining 'ethnicity' into a framework of 'cultural authenticity'. The Abruzzo communities urgently need to be supported on the ICH guidelines and face their future in a responsible, honest and realistic way, hopefully so they become a symbol of sustainability and a pacific vehicle between cultures. Therefore, the Forum of the ICH Conventions should realistically consider what the public folklore could become within a local sphere that misses the right information and rules.

#### **4 The Dilemmas about an ICH Regional Law**

To be an anthropologist today increasingly means to study contradictions, *i.e.* the basic aspect of cultural studies and human life. The cultural an-

thropologist can help with singular safeguard practices but can also help with the evaluation of the application of laws at institutional level. With this new professional sense, I am going to conclude this essay.

Since 2003, international legal instruments have configured a legal category which is extraordinary but 'impure' and in order to be applied requires much public training, that in Abruzzo is still lacking. Here, the situation around the ICH lacks institutional coordination, considering that several elements are competing to be enrolled in the UNESCO ICH List label, having started out individually and without regional consultation. So, an ICH Regional Law is the only way to apply to local communities (for example, the Pro Loco and the Cultural Associations) the precious ethical guidelines issued by the ICSICH, as I publically declared in 2015 after the Ethical Principles publication.<sup>12</sup> An ICH Regional Law means in fact to create an Inventory, to move the communities towards a reflexive attitude and to hopefully regulate the funds distribution in a fairer direction. So, the Chief of the Regional Department for Environment, Land, Parks and Popular Traditions asked a group of 'volunteer consultants' to write the ICH Regional law. I was the sole representative of academia and I noted the absence of the law scholars and also of the UNPLI, which in my opinion would have been essential to develop an inclusive Law. Since many members of the assembly lacked the ICH know-how, the work of elaboration has been participative but difficult and contradictory.

In my reading of the Abruzzo ICH, inclusion and equality are basic factors of empowerment: these policies are important in an area where cultural colonialism has stimulated fragmentation, parochialism, conflict and envies, described in detailed studies (Spedicato 2010; L. Giancristofaro 2017). Therefore, I propose to write an ICH Law aimed to promote inclusivity and cooperation at local, national and international level, suggesting that more than ever associations for historical re-enactment should take part according to ICH guidelines, because of their strong legitimacy in the territory. I also suggest that it is necessary to promote a clear ICH international cooperation strategy to reinforce social boundaries, because the associations for tradition often work like a patronal power. Unfortunately, in regulating the regional intangible domain (definition, identification, safeguard), an unexpected problem has emerged: the operators were not too familiar with Ethical Principles and either with the sense of the safeguard. Many operators mistook the ICH paradigm with the ethno-anthropological documents that in Abruzzo are professionally inventoried in the CADRA, which excludes the modernity items. Of course, a festival like San Domenico in Cocullo is deeply inventoried in the CADRA,

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<sup>12</sup> The Twelve Ethical Principles for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (Decision 10.COM 15.a).

besides the customs that are no longer practiced. So, when I proposed the creation of a regional inventory ICH “inclusive and open also to new items (I mean the historical re-enactments), to implement an educational aim”, many operators protested, claiming that the Abruzzo ICH inventory should be reserved for the living heritage over 75 years of age. So, the final project could be affected by this ‘self-defence’ of the operators who are devoted to the marginal micro-communities, without know actually the ICH inclusive and pedagogical approach. Someone should finally explain to the operators that the ICH safeguard is not a simple documentation of ethnological items.

And there is more. The majority of the consultant assembly requested a motion to set up an ICH Study Centre working as an evaluating competent authority in the management and distribution of funds. Personally, I would rather follow the guidelines of the “integration Proposals for the Safeguarding of the ICH” that in 2013 were developed by a team of academics for the purpose of drawing up the Draft Law on the Culture of the Veneto Region (Picchio Forlati 2014). According to the Veneto guidelines, in fact, to ensure the concentration of economic resources on the most deserving initiatives, the region established a partnership with NGOs, universities and research centers, avoiding the creation of a new and expensive structure within the public administration. A new regional structure designed to safeguard the ICH, in fact, could be the reason for the difficulties in the implementation of the Abruzzan ICH law, which the Regional Council has not yet approved. In the meantime, the fact that several big festivals are still institutionally financed whilst the smaller communities are left to themselves, is increasing the internal competition to be enrolled in the UNESCO ICH List label and while no reflexive path seems to be put in place nothing changes.

Of course, the Regional Law will be institutionally reviewed and I trust after many reviews the Law will be aligned with the standards. Anyway, this sample is only a small part of a general frame of deficiencies in the application of the ICH 2003 Convention. In Italy, the MiBACT is still unable even to ‘think’ through an idea of an ICH. Indeed, in the Urbani’s 2004 Code, art. 7bis (2008), provides mere protection (not a safeguard action) only for the intangible expressions that are “represented by material evidence”. It is therefore no surprise when the cultural stake-holders involved in old and new festivals cannot even ‘think’ about the ICH and its wider educational goals, because they are drawn by popular goals such as the marketing is (Khaznadar 2014).

The 2003 UNESCO Convention’s requirement for a safeguard activity will continue to fail to be implemented in Italy if the cultural stake-holders and the Pro Loco do not receive a professional training about the ICH. The Italian and European ICH institutions should reflect upon what the State now risks becoming within society and should resolve the inconsistencies

and delays of the institutions on the territory. Institutional inconsistencies and delays increase the lack of an intangible heritage education, whereas institutions should have the duty to decrease this gap. Institutional inconsistencies and delays are unfortunately intertwined with the resurrection of old romantic metaphors for folk tradition as a static, organic and inviolable body, with defence mechanisms against cultural diversity and creativity, with the attitude of exclusivity and closure that stimulates conflict and blocks any kind of sustainable development. Therefore, today more than ever, scholars should work with stake-holders, institutions and cultural brokers, to realize a change of perspective through the “social use of cultural anthropology” that, from Boas to Gramsci, was indicated as the primary objective for the reflection on cultural diversity and folklore.

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