TEMPORALITY AND SPATIALITY:
OBSERVATIONS ON IDENTITY CRISIS AN EXAMPLE FROM
AN ENVIRONMENTAL STRUCTURE IN SOUTHERN ITALY

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1. Introduction

Nowadays territory and climate are recognized as factors that unquestionably affect social relationships. Many scholars (Crespi, 1992, p. 196) such as Aristotle, Jean Bodin, Charles Tocqueville and the Baron of Montesquieu (1973, p. 97), just to mention a few, have been concerned with this kind of conditioning influence. In particular, Montesquieu claims that there is a straight connection between democratic, republican and despotic forms of government and the spatiality of territory. Tocqueville (1973, p. 97) had attributed the affirmation of American spirit of equality to the wideness of USA territories compared to the extension of smaller nations. One can claim that cultural mediations are bound to the environment because the environment itself is mostly the result of transformations pursued directly by men or through their technological methodologies. This would justify the intersection between sociology and human geography studies that aims at contributing to the study of socialization dynamics based on the analysis of essential elements in the development of the environment.

As Mautone (2002, p. 17) states, one of the key questions posed by human geography is establishing whether an individual is passively subjected to the influence of nature or, on the contrary, the individual has a crucial function. The author observes that under the influence of Darwinian theories, a large part of geographers have conceived the man-nature relationship in an univocal way: the physical element prevails on the human element. The turning point was the contribution of Paul Vidal de la Blache1, who claimed that an individual is no longer subjected to nature but he is able to interfere with it through exact decisions that come from culture, technology and history. Lucien Febvre (1966, p. 578) embraces the circular scheme of influences in socio-environmental processes, and he states that: "transformed, adapted and modified by man, the humanized earth undoubtedly reacts on man afterwards; but first of all it is the individual who will wield his power of transformation and adaptation on the earth".

Even though Febvre seems to highlight human primateship, it is now self-evident that the relationship between nature and socialized man is not unidirectional. The natural environment to Febvre is a set of possibilities: social actors act towards it selecting it. "Nothing is given nice and ready from nature to man, nothing is imposed to politics from geography: there is simply the adaptation of man to certain possibilities"; however, the sensibility towards the environmental balance is a given fact.

An issue of considerable interest is the distinction between complex and simple structures, and the analysis of the environmental factors that give birth to a certain kind of structure, being a structure a relational and diversified set of elements, where every element has a significance that is related to its role in the general context.

In the light of this premise, it is necessary to consider environment conditions as something external, whose existence is a given fact, independently from social actors' actions, even if these are interpreted and represented through cultural categories which they belong to. These conditions are in close connection with social forms and at the same time they can be considered as structures: the featuring elements of such structures are the relationships that bind the different factors that constitute it and that acquire a meaning only if they are valued according to their position within the structure.

1 Editor's note: Vidal de la Blache P.: French geographer who studied the adaptation of man to physical phenomena. In particular, he focused on the places in which he detected the interaction between environment and human intervention, and on man's growing transformation abilities connected to his own cultural peculiarities and to technological advance.
An appropriate distinction is the one existing between natural and social environment conditions and system structures. The latter are born from the will of the social actor on the basis of historical experience; instead, environmental conditions are obviously a fact that is external to the social group it interacts with. Specifically, this paper will analyze how and to what extent the environment and most of the factors that constitute it affect the analysis of social processes and modify the identity of the individual.

The entire argumentation will pivot on the crucial relationship of mutual exchange between human geography and sociology; in particular, the discussion will focus on environmental impact and social relationship, and it will aim at giving a possible interpretation to the close bond that links identity problems with globalization: the growing need of identification (localism) and, in extreme situations, the consequent birth of forms of narcissism. Through the observation of a case study on a very small area in Southern Italy, the present study will pinpoint how demographic impoverishment can bring about an identity crisis and even lead to a possible extinction of small communities. As mentioned above, some specific dimensions have a particular position among the environmental structures that act and affect social relationships:

Mineral resources are linked to the natural environment because they are produced by the environment and they represent a pivotal element for social organizations. Moreover, the environment becomes at the same time a possibility and a limit for the exploitation of its resources.

Environment’s exploitation (Vallega, 1998, p. 66 ff.) for the use of natural resources depends on manifold social factors. As a matter of fact, the demand for a particular resource by a given social group will affect both the appearance that such exploitation would cause and the supply of the resource itself that will tend to drain away more cautiously than others. Indeed, the question of mineral resources involves such elements as the demographic aspect, the social stratification, and the distribution of the population on the territory by sex and age: this points out that the shortage of a resource determines the result of human intervention on the natural environment. Natural gas, for instance, acquires economic significance when man discovers its potentiality as a resource; but above all, natural gas acquires significance as the object of a change in behavior with respect to reality, as it is linked both to social experience and to the forms of symbolic mediation.

The concept of shortage allows a double interpretation: it can be considered as unwanted, i.e. as the result of control problems and imbalance; or it can be regarded as intentional, i.e. caused by political and economic elements. Shortage lacks an absolute and objective principle, therefore it will necessarily have to be related to the problems of labor organization and production cycle.

Temporality features all social relationships and the connection of social relationships with material and institutional elements.

The concept of time gets different functions and meanings according to the cultural environment that it expresses to the extent that time can become a constitutive factor of the entire social reality to which it makes reference. The notion of time is changeable as it varies according to historical moments and circumstances. Development has certainly accelerated the pace of life that has become faster and faster through the centuries. A time component that seems essential for the creation of a social organization is predictability, which compels to the analysis of both past and future times.

The analysis of time structures requires a clarification first of all: man follows given times, which are related to the degree of technological and cultural advance that the human group has achieved; on the other hand, nature itself has its own times, either brief or extremely long, which effectively represent a physical element that cannot be ignored by human structures. Nature and communities may seem to follow two separate histories, each one with a different rhythm, which try to cross one another involving different areas, now a small one, then a very wide area, until they get to involve the whole planet.

Temporality can be considered as the result of socially codified expectations. Sociologist Durkheim (1971, p. 628) has coined the concept of ’social time’, which he defines as "the pace of social life which lays at the heart of time category". According to the kind of relationship that social actors establish with their environment, time can be conceived as a reversible
circular dimension, as in traditional agriculture-based society whose production was bound to the cycle of seasons; or it can be regarded as an irreversible dimension, as in industrial societies whose production is not bound to seasons and it is oriented towards a basically infinite development.

Also the theory expressed by Merton (1984, p. 263) is interesting in this respect. Merton's theory on socially expected durations is based on those expectations that feature a wide range of social structures. A simple and immediate example is the amount of time that is necessary for an individual to reach a social status within a group. The position held by any individual within the social structure is linked to the movement in time. As a matter of fact, populations change, the relationship between men and women, between the young and the elderly evolve, and as a consequence an individual’s position on the imaginary social ladder changes. In order to tackle the question of time, one should observe how natural factors, even in this case, appear to be connected to the structure of social forms and to cultural expressions, with an intent of mediation towards the experience of temporality itself.

How does time actually work on human structures affecting their organization? The following example may explain the question: according to the time in which the different lithosphere layers of a territory were formed, a given type of mineral will be found. At the time in which a social group settles down in an area, it will create the means and the workmanship that can exploit that mineral. Therefore, this will affect the organization of several aspects in the life of that social group, as well as the landscape. In addition to this, the study carried out by Belloni (1986, pp. 72-73) on “time budget” highlights the ways in which time is used in everyday life.

Space acquires significance by virtue of the interaction between itself and human activity.

Durkheimian concept of social morphology is described by the author in the following way: space is an element that is closely linked to the study of social morphology, and it is also a subject of reflection for social morphology. (Durkheim, 1922, v. II, pp. 541 ff). Within this scope, the role of natural environment in the formation of different kinds of societies is unquestioned. Though, it is difficult to separate the natural elements from the artificial elements that result from the action of social actors. As a matter of fact, the former are perceived within the society, but they are produced by the society as well. The contribution of historical experience is crucial for reaching a result as the analysis cannot ignore past experience. In this respect, the study carried out by Toynbee (1950, pp. 31 ff.) gives a great contribution: the author summarizes man-environment relationship into a sort of challenge-response relationship. This is based on the situation portrayed by Fevre (1966, p. 578) who suggests a 'possibilist' theory: social actors who face bonds and opportunities offered by the environment choose according their own culture and technology. Therefore, one can state that cultural models condition the structure of spaces. 'Space' in most cases means to man urban space, and surely this is even truer today than in the past. Current studies in the field of urban sociology claim that [Guidicini] it cannot be represented any longer as the prototype of Enlightenment town that considered these as key features: beauty, justice, efficiency and truth. The concept of beauty is limited within well defined spaces and times, while efficiency and justice acquire a merely economic significance with respect to the allocation of resources; truth hands over to science and technology, which rise to absolute values.

The discussion will now move on to the observation of the crossing between the birth of an environment such as the urban structure and the actions that social actors perform within the structure. When a town is born it respects the functional necessities that produce social behaviors; within the town a sort of hierarchical order arranges the artificial environmental structures and affects movement, integration and actors' social space. Buildings and their symbolic character represent and strengthen the collective identity and they weigh upon the social structure, therefore they become a dominance structure.

Simmel (1995, p. 94) has underlined the ambivalent character of these structures: if on one hand the town offers an increased number of choices and chances of interactions between individuals, on the other hand, the town fosters such human relationship that may provoke loneliness and alienation.
2. The contrast between rural and urban areas and the transformation from a "community" to a "society" territorial dimension

With no mention to the issue of landscape, this section will tackle the influence on social organization and the life of the individual. Within an urban area a highly complex and stratified structure can be identified. Such strata are definitively less dense in non-urbanized areas, even though even in such areas rural life organization determines a rigid social ladder. Urban areas, as well as rural areas, are not unchangeable as the course of time produces considerable transformations. For instance, Papaioannu's studies on ekistika (Papaioannu, 1980, pp. 175 ff) pinpoint exactly this aspect: today the world is living the age of megalopolis, which are doomed to give way to eperopolis; the final achievement should be the ecumenopolis, i.e. the total urbanization of the surface of the earth. Time variable is not the only factor that can influence urban structures, as these change also according to the places and the degree of development achieved by a society.

Living in a town or in a rural area can affect the most intimate structures of an organization. Indeed, the birthrate in cities is lower than that in the country, and this is caused primarily by the hectic pace of city life. Nevertheless, within a single city the birthrate may vary according to social strata. For example, Italian middle-class workers tend to give birth to one or two children at most, because within the perspectives afforded by their work environment they see the chance of improving their status in the social ladder.

3. The rise of a global culture highlights an openness of geographical spaces and a consequent increase of the distance between individuals, which in most cases results in a proper "identity crisis"

From a sociological and cultural point of view, global culture, the child of globalization, is a standardization process of lifestyles, models and tastes; it is a process that can unite very different people which can feel closer simply because they can purchase the same food, the same fashion items, and share culture forms that are more and more alike. In this respect, also territorial bounds should be considered as they foster this standardization process.

Here the question as to whether globalization might have a positive effect in the formation of new identities, new worldwide forms of belonging and solidarity arises; if it might produce a sense of disorientation, a feeling of impotence of people and traditional institutions that are not able of handling the growing complexity; or if globalization will foster the perception of a collective responsibility with respect to the worldwide system and its manifold troubles. In this context, the term 'identity' makes reference to man's feeling of belonging that allows an individual to identify him/herself with a social group through a sort of shared memory that has a single cultural ground. Identity is reflected in people's lifestyles, language and religion. Man arranges his own lifestyle according to the criteria that have been established by the social group he belongs to (Gallino, 2001).

A notable number of theoretical approaches have been developed on the concept of identity, so much so that the term itself has acquired multiple meanings. Generally, identity is the central aspect of conscience itself. Human being's existential insecurity pushes man to seek a confirmation of his own identity in the explications of his culture of origin. However, the actual confirmation of man's existence and identity can be found only through the acknowledgment of others; this kind of socialization can be achieved only when man has interiorized "the generalized other", as Mead maintains.

F. Hegel had already pinpointed the fact that man tries to fulfil himself through his own actions: "Man becomes for others". Pizzorno claims that man can assert himself and consolidate his self-esteem through the participation to collective action. Also Axel Honnet has investigated the issue of the dynamics of recognition. Following the thought of Hegel and Mead, Honnet observes that "men owe the experience of mutual recognition to the chance of establishing a relationship with themselves" so that man can develop a 'normal' identity. Nevertheless, the ruling trend in post-industrial society is the closure of man in his own identity. In particular, as Touraine states, there is a tendency towards a "socialization of the defense of identity". This brings forth some important observations on such a concept: it cannot be considered any longer as a permanent and fixed fact, but as something that has been built through the process of identification in the course of life through the roles that men and
groups occupy. Just the relationship with the otherness and the recognition of the other allow man to overcome the closure and the defense of identity with no fear of diversity or loss of identity, trying to make a live culture last longer.

Identity has two key aspects: similarity with others and difference; the latter makes man autonomous. This is actually a conflict but it can be managed in a balanced way.

Keeping the difference means above all seeking one's own identity, a sphere of free expression and identification and the need of playing different roles at the same time within a system that imposes ritual rules (Leonini 1998, p. 110). Goffman (1989, p. 87) maintains that the actor is able to make use of identity as a similarity, without absolutizing it; the actor acknowledges identity's limit, otherwise he would end up in the "rebellion against anonymity" (Basso, 1975). Eric Fromm himself had indicated the presence in the modern system of factors that were able to lead to personal and social identity disruption that would head to protests against the dominant culture. In particular, Fromm has dealt with personal and social disruption processes caused by modern industrial system, and he has maintained that certain factors within this system are able to favor the development of an impotent personality that is lonely, anxious and insecure; the loss of the ego provokes in man the need to conform in order to meet others' expectations.

Often the recovery of this identity occurs through the identification of opposing forces to counteract and confront. In such a case there is a "protest" against the dominant culture. The consciousness of one's own ethnic and cultural identity, for example, may be originated only from the comparison with other cultures and from the acknowledgment of the different featuring elements that distinguish it. This explains the tendency to withdrawing in one's own culture (localism), to protecting it as a necessary form of rediscovery of man. What man is actually trying to protect is his own socio-ethical identity, which is nothing but all the values that belong to morality and social issues. These values are the ground of everyone's existence in the relationship with others; but at the same time the same values are used as means for self-recognition and self-definition by the group one belongs to.

Thus, Socratean "knowing oneself" seems a pretty harsh journey to life sciences, therefore man lives hanging between identity and disintegration. Back in 1968 Parsons had discussed about a "growing pluralization of role involvement" that can lead to Durkheim's anomy (Durkheim, 1973, p. 293) and to what anthropologists (as Lorenz himself did) call the "cultural and psychological void". This could be linked to the role of "passive consumer" played by man after the industrial age, which allows man to fulfil any desire through purchasing, and to realize his own existence through purchasing. In this age there seems to be no more interest in tradition and collective memory. Several authors have highlighted the crisis of the model that has been handed over from traditional middle-class culture, characterized by a "strong individualism that has withdrawn into itself, rejecting any social and political responsibility", and ending up in "narcissistic dependencies".

Most contemporary sociologists have acknowledged an incurable fracture between the traditional society and current developed societies. In the past, thinkers such as Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tonnies have underlined the considerable differences between a community (Geimeinschaft) that features a strong common conscience (mechanical solidarity) and strong personal and family ties, and a society (Gesellschaft) that due to work distribution features a lower common conscience (organic solidarity) and a prevailing impersonal business-oriented character. Today more than ever men have to obey to new demands from institutions, new controls and constraints dictated by the labor market: man requires certain prerequisite in order to be entitled to a right. In every day life, man continuously has to choose

2 Lorenz maintains that the loss of spiritual heritage of the origin culture has not been followed by the spirituality of a different culture. Man becomes then a nonentity as it is often evident on the face many young people, who are just the outcast of the spirituality of their own culture. In this way Lorenz explains some of the problems that afflict new generations, as drugs, crime and violence. Lorenz, 1974, p. 339.

3 Tonnies Ferdinand gave his contribution to the new look of modern sociology, he pinpointed its peculiarities and characteristics compared to other sciences. His most famous work is "Community and Society" (1887).
between different identities, he is forced to face the "tyranny of possibilities", which he tries to escape even turning to irrational dimensions (magic, etc.).

The concept of identity has been observed also by functionalist theories, symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology. Parsons himself places identity on a higher position and he assigns it the task of coordinating and controlling the remaining parts of personality; identity represents the system of meanings that allows man to give a sense to his actions (for himself and for others) relating him with the universe of symbols and socially shared values (Parsons, Ibidem). Mead's symbolic interactionism regards identity as the individual's representation of his/her own self. Identity is not fixed but it evolves in the continuous confrontation with social integration. To Parsons, identity allows man to set a hierarchy of aims and to act in order to pursue them. The author claims that modern identity basically keeps its structure and function, while roles plurality and the increased choice are not an expression of alienation for the ego but the chance of an autonomous identity, even more than in the past. In Goffmann (1972, p. 240) the many and conflicting roles played by the social individual correspond to as many identities. Modern phenomenology underlines that the absence of a unified symbolic universe and the consequent "pluralization of social worlds of life" drive man to relationships with different systems of meaning that are not integrated and often in conflict. Thus, the lack of integration between different sections of social life becomes an issue of differentiation of man's subjective reality. Identity becomes open, flexible, a potentiality that can be adapted the variety of chances and to the contrasts between different realities. To Luhmann social complexity is characterized by the proportion between the excess of choices given by the environment and the system's limited ability to realize them. So a selection is needed. The task of identity is that of orientating system's selections reducing social complexities, and that of promoting the richness of complexities keeping denied chances and adapting them in order to reuse them in future selections.

Globalization may have produced uncertainty and frailty in individuals and groups denying the stability of belonging and the certainty of identification, and depriving man of stable reference criteria. For this reason, today there are both a degree of planetization and cultural integration within the "global" society, and mobilizations that seek to assert peoples and cultures' rights of self-determining their own differences. There is a strong sense of localism that opposes the globalizing process. Global culture can suggest a whole series of similar perspectives of the world, but it cannot neglect some trends of cultural particularism; these are based on the increased awareness of those who live in marginal conditions that their own difference can be acknowledge on equal terms.

Why such a revival of local socio-cultural elements?

The answer can be attributed to the several social phenomena that characterize the rapid socio-cultural transformation process after the 60s, to the fast standardization process, to the growing gap between wealth and poverty. Small groups and local communities have seen their cultural identity totter and they have felt the urge to find themselves through new forms of communication, not in a global village, but in more intimate and closer spheres. Examples of these various expression of cultural revival are pilgrimages to sanctuaries, patronal festivals, miracle plays, which have penitential, magic, religious and ritual functions, with a powerful socializing character. The attempt of protecting an identity is put forward also by underlining the differences, by defending the genuinity of typical agricultural products and the originality of particular traditions. In fact, the myth of the city has attracted the vast majority of people who have felt the urge to become part of it, both for the chance of new work opportunities given by industrial development, and for the chance of living a more interesting and stimulating life, with new opportunities of growth and social exchange.

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4 Cfr. Barberis, 1981, p. 130. The first laws against urbanism in Italy date back to the 30s (law 9 April 1931, n. 358 and law 6 July 1939, n. 1092) but only in the 60s the abrogation of any ban on the displacement of manpower passed (law 5 February 1961, n. 5). In 1962 migrations around the country reached the peak of 2.196.000 units and the rural population formed the largest part of these migration flows, though it did not necessarily abandoned the agriculture industry. 1971 census shows that about 10.000 people from Southern Italy were still working in agriculture as they were fostered by the advantages of the land market that favoured those who would sell in the South and purchase in the North.
After mid 70s, the life model began to show its limits in terms of environment impact, pollution and natural environment destruction. The issue of "globalization of environmental problems" was brought about as the danger of pollution could not be held within a single country's sky or sea. Such problems need to be faced through cooperation and the adoption of common regulations by all nations.

4. An example of identity crisis in a small village in Southern Italy

The discussion of identity within a single country seems rather banal. If a social group recognizes itself as a community, as the fruit of its own culture and traditions, and if others acknowledge this, one will take for granted that the group could express its own identity. Moreover, claiming an identity crisis of self-awareness and recognition by others is just a factious way to maintain that a country is dying out. The identity crisis phenomenon has become widespread in small Italian local communities, especially in Southern not-industrialized areas. Many villages have turned into 'ghost towns', with very few inhabitants who are doomed to extinct due to low birth rate, emigration to urban centers and growing aged populations.

A typical case is that of Roccabascerana, at 417 meters above the sea, with an overall area of 12,42 square km: agriculture covers 80 %, forest 25%, and 15% of its territory is unproductive. The village is located on the eastern side of Valle Caudina, 23 Km far from the provincial capital, Avellino, 21 Km from Benevento, and 57 Km from the regional capital, Naples (Albrizio, 1977, p. 11).

Roccabascerana is located at the feet of Mount Partenio, and it has been recently included in the “Comunità Montana del Partenio” [consortium of municipalities in Partenio area]. Its population is composed by 2335 residents, 51% man, 49% woman, and 15% of these are young; it is distributed all over the territory which is divided into five hamlets: Tuoro, Cassano Caudino, Squillani, Zolli, Tufara Valle, and Roccabascerana, the 'capital'. The population increases, or even doubles its size, during summer (usually only over August), due to ex-residents and young people on holidays who visit their families. This kind of tourism is doomed to decrease as family ties with the elderly will gradually end due to natural causes. In the future these places will not be a center of interest, both for the absolute lack of tourist facilities and for the loss of family ties. On the other hand, the birth of nearby holiday farms would foster a different kind of tourism, with people visiting the area on a day-trip or on brief holidays. As for age indicators, data show that the adults constitute the larger portion of the population (85% of residents have reached a mature age).

With respect to employment, there is a general withdrawal from agriculture because the few people who are still in employment age are oriented towards different industries. Therefore, if one relates this situation to the high unemployment rate in Southern Italy, in the near future Roccabascerana will most likely lose its best work force and its most promising minds. The village had already suffered from the consistent emigration flows that had characterized Southern Italy rural areas. Nowadays, the remaining work force is oriented towards the secondary industry and state service industry. In time, such a choice has caused the end of typical cultivations, autochthonous vine growing and refined olive groves that covered the hills that today has been occupied by the village area. The area was well known for the Aglianico grape cultivation. This change has determined the extinction of local agro-food traditions: there is no cultivation of typical products and as a consequence traditional cultivation techniques have been abandoned.

5 Editor's note: Since 1972 a series of international events were held which focused on the discussion of environmental issues. First of all, the Stockholm Conference which was followed up by the Brundtland Report in 1986, and later by the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. These events have brought crucial issues to the attention of the international community: natural resources shortage and exhaustibility. Nevertheless, the Earth Summit in Rio caused a change of perspective with respect to the issue of environmental balance as a necessary precondition for the economical development. Many claimed that there was no chance for protecting the environment without development, i.e. without an equal access to resources by all mankind. At the Stockholm Conference instead the dominant principle was that there is no development without environmental protection.

6 Official data from town hall records.
Another factor that increases the identity crisis of small villages as Roccabascerana is the very low birth rate. Fewer and fewer children are born: in 2003 for example, only 12 children were born, only the 0.5% of the population. Considering the consistent amount of elderly people, it is self-evident that such a small number of new-born children affects the whole social economic and productive system of this small southern village.

A limited work force can produce less, therefore the market decreases and without economic exchanges there are few chances to keep a society alive. The concurrence of all these negative factors necessarily provokes an identity crisis in the community, whose fragile structure is gradually collapsing while wasting its cultural heritage. A potential industry for the employment of the few young residents is that of road constructions. For example the completion of motorway A16 (Naples – Canosa di Puglia) and the opening of the Avellino – Salerno belt would also break the ancient isolation from the coastal areas. As for the other municipalities of the Partenio consortium, the structural demographic problem makes the situation even worse. Who will ever repopulate these areas? In the attempt to find an answer to this question, two possible perspectives can be put forward:

**A revival of the area:** a rapid and meticulous application of local or EU projects for new allocations of resources, productive reconversions and the rediscovery of the area, in order to foster the repopulation of the community; young work force would find new chances of employment, which would drive young people them to leave urban centers and promote a demographic increase.

**A demographic reconversion:** a definitive depopulation of the old villages and a new migration wave of foreign communities that would merge with locals. This solution would have unforeseeable consequences. According to the characteristics of migration flows in Italy over the last years, these new communities would be formed mainly by Albanians; in fact, some of these have already settled and have been perfectly integrated with local communities.

Unfortunately, also a third pessimistic perspective should be considered. Given the current demographic situation and the evident inadequate interest from institutions, the worst scenario is probably the most likely: a progressive reduction of the aged resident population that would end in the definite and irreversible extinction of the community.

This may not be significant in demographic terms but it is crucial from a social and environmental point of view. Such a perspective would be a serious loss for the complex mosaic of traditions and rituals that have gradually merged losing their original connotation and becoming a part of a larger ensemble, which constitutes the national conscience and identity. Traditions and ancient symbols which are part of the national common and individual memory would definitively disappear. The death of a community means of course also the death of its identity. The national 'postmodern' identity would be badly affected by such a scenario. The citizens of the "European community", and Italians above all, are rooted in those rural and marginal identities that emigration, globalization, social instability and standardizations have undermined despite the localizing process that attempts to counteract the effects of a global society.

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