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Open challenges and possible alliances for two fields of knowledge and practice: museology and urban planning in the 21st century

Abstract

This article presents some preliminary notes elaborated within a research project that explores the question of democratizing the approaches for taking care of territorial heritage and marginal landscapes from a community based-perspective, moving from a critique to the mainstream debate on the Anthropocene. The author discusses the need to cross spheres of knowledge, action, and context, arguing the necessity to consider various forms of community-based perspectives. The article provides some notes for a possible joint research program in museology and urban planning.

Keywords: ecomuseums, *nouvelle muséologie*, community-based planning.

Résumé

Cet article présente quelques notes préliminaires élaborées dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche qui explore la question de la démocratisation des approches pour prendre soin du patrimoine territorial et des paysages marginaux dans une perspective communautaire, passant d'une critique au débat dominant sur l'Anthropocène. L'auteur discute de la nécessité de traverser les sphères de connaissance, d'action et de contextes, en argumentant la nécessité de considérer diverses formes de perspectives communautaires. L'article fournit quelques notes pour un possible programme conjoint de recherche en muséologie et aménagement du territoire.

Mots-clés : écomusées, nouvelle muséologie, planification communautaire.

Introduction

This article presents some preliminary reflections elaborated in the framework of a research project[1] concerned with the possibilities of democratizing the approaches for taking care of territorial heritage (MAGNAGHI 2021) and marginal landscapes, from a community-based planning perspective (SAIJA et al. 2017; PAPPALARDO 2017). This research project is developed at the University of Catania, Department of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Laboratory for the Environmental and Ecological Planning and Design of the Territory (LabPEAT)[2]. Here, we have been long concerned with the problem of "democratizing technical knowledge(s)" (GRAVAGNO 2011) as an opportunity for "democratizing democracy" (DE SOUSA SANTOS 2002), with a practical focus on Sicily, a region that can be considered a *southern* context in relation with the so-called Global North[3].

Being graduated as an engineer, I have a technical background. However, I am among those scholars who have directly experienced the limitations, pitfalls, and burdens of technocratic approaches (FISCHER 2000), as well as the use of technical knowledge and technologies for imposing unbalanced power structures and perpetrating an undesirable *status quo.*

As such, in this paper, I will not discuss innovative technological approaches at the center of expert-driven debates. Rather, from my situated knowledge (HARAWAY 2020), I will discuss some ideas concerning an ontological and epistemological turn in the 21st century, through a possible alliance between two fields of knowledge and practice – museology on

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[1] Funded through the Italian PON AIM program (European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund). Attraction and International Mobility of Researchers, CUP: E66C8001380007). The PON AIM's scope is fostering networking activities at the international level between researchers and their institutions. Specifically, it targets researchers based in European Regions where local development is "lagging behind", such as Sicily (IT). For some quantitative data about GDP and HDI in Sicily, please visit: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210303-1
and https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ITA (last access: May 30th, 2022).

[2] Within this research project, I have also came across several institutions over three years, from North to South Europe[2]: from Norway, Belgium, to Spain, and Portugal. Specifically, I have conducted my research project in the PON AIM framework in four Universities in a year and a half. First, I have spent three months "virtually" at the University of Liège, Service of Museology, Research Unit of Art, Archaeology and Heritage, during the Covid-19 global pandemic crisis, exploring the practice and concept of insurgent museologies (DUARTE CÂNDIDO ET AL. 2019) and their possible transdisciplinary intersections with urban planning (PAPPALARDO 2021; DUARTE CÂNDIDO & PAPPALARDO, forthcoming). Then, I have spent three months in smart-working and one month in presence, at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Architecture and Planning, exploring the concept of co-production. Two months have been dedicated to dig into the intersections between urban planning, and environmental history at the University of Santiago, Spain. Finally, while I write this article, I am at Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias conducting a residency in Sociomuseology, still exploring possible intersections with urban planning.

[3] Although the dichotomy between Global North and South can be discussed, here I refer to Global North as an area of economic privileges comparing with other contexts of the world. For a problematization of the concept of Global North, see for example MUKHOPADHYAY ET AL. 2021, accessible here : https://eprints.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/ae/preprint/view/11 (last access: May 30th, 2022).

one side, urban planning on the other –, to critically tackle the challenges of the Anthropocene, in its various nuances.

Specifically, within the field of museology, I refer to social museology in terms of all those practices aimed at raising awareness about the past, producing social change in the present, and valuing the agency of social movements (CHAGAS ET AL. 2014).

Such practices are part of a broader framework known as *Nouvelle Muséologie* (DESVALLÉES 1992) that emerged after the seminal Roundtable of Santiago of Chile in 1972. On that occasion, not only museologists but also other professionals, including urban planners, met and put the basis for a new idea of museums "in the service of societies."

The focus of my research project is to explore such practices that surge spontaneously from the ground (DUARTE CÂNDIDO 2020), yet have the potential to generate an impact at the policy level, innovating spatial settings and institutional arrangements.

Recalling the approach of emancipation and liberation for the most oppressed communities practiced by Paulo Freire (1967), and today widespread as his legacy, I investigate how the such approach could be mirrored both in museology – more precisely, in what Moutinho & Primo (2020) define sociomuseology –, and those forms of community-based planning that are concerned with emancipation and liberation for the most oppressed social groups (FORESTER 1999, 2017; REARDON 2000).

An interesting joining link between these fields of knowledge and practice – museology and planning – could be identified in ecomuseums (DE VARINE 2017): they arose within the framework of *Nouvelle Muséologie*, and have been translated, especially in Italy, as tools for community-based landscape planning using community mapping (MAGNAGHI 2010), as practices of participatory inventories linked with space.

These intersections have suggested that social museology and community-based planning already have a lot in common, yet more could be further explored and systematized in the international debate.

In an attempt to do so, this article explores some of these intersections. As such, it aims to propose a first set of reflections on the significance of crossing spheres of knowledge, action, and contexts in light of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene, as it is critically discussed in various streams of literature. The scope of this article is to open ontological and epistemological questions that involve both the sphere of museology and urban planning, drawing on an extensive literature review that also incorporates those authors whose perspective is less represented in the anglophone, north-western literature.

The methodology of the research project conducted at large – which this paper discusses as a part of the theoretical framework – is based on trans-disciplinary intersections between streams of knowledge, as well as between academia and the world outside it (HADORN ET AL. 2008).

Specifically, on one side, there are the museums and the museology with their "great potential to raise public awareness of the value of cultural and natural heritage and the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to their care and transmission"[4]. On the other side, there are plans, urban planning, and public policies to organize the future for hope (FORESTER 2017), especially within the most challenging contexts. Together, they could constitute a suitable alliance for tracing possible future trajectories rooted in a critical awareness of the past.

Thus, this article proposes some reflections for contributing to the critical debate concerned with the way "*we" inhabit the world,* considering "we" as an inclusive subject made of various human and non-human communities, in the light of the recent international interest around the concept of the Anthropocene and its various interpretative nuances. The following paragraphs dig into such nuances, trying to answer the question: why (ontologies), and how (epistemologies), is it urgent to intersect museology and urban planning, looking from the perspective of pushing for socio-ecological justice (SCHLOSBERG 2004)?

An attempt to answer this question is given in the second and third paragraphs: the second paragraph is concerned with the *why,* while the third paragraph tries to tackle the *how,* moving to some preliminary results of the research process that informed this paper.

The discussion and conclusion propose some reflections for opening a line of investigation based on intersecting social museology and urban planning in light of the challenges that the Anthropocene – with its various nuances – poses.

1. Beyond the Anthropocene. First notes for a critical review

This paragraph aims to give a broad framework for the urgency of an alliance between disciplines: in this case, between social museology and urban planning. Above all, it sheds some light on the necessity of a broader alliance between various forms of knowledge, disciplines and practices, sights and perspectives, people of the Earth, humans, and non-humans, in the era of a long-lasting global crisis such as the Anthropocene is.

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[4] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246331 (last access: May 30th, 2022).

The term Anthropocene gained popularity some decades ago thanks to the work of the biologist Eugene F. Stoermer, and it has been formalized by the Nobel Prize in Chemistry Paul Crutzen (2006). It indicates the current geological period during which huge transformations occurred because of anthropic action; such transformations have produced a variety of effects that strongly altered the Earth system.

The urgent call for fighting climate change has been expressed by several movements worldwide, such as the recent action of the youngest generations of Fridays for Future, the movements for climate justice, the long-lasting battles of indigenous populations in many *southern* contexts of the Globe, etc.

Although the definition of Anthropocene is now well established, and climate change is on the agenda of policymakers in the international arena, more profound efforts are required to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement – adopted at the climate conference (COP21) in December 2015 – to limit global warming to below 2 (preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius) compared to pre-industrial levels.

However, it is not only a matter of lowering temperatures through technical measures; it is, above all, a political and ethical issue: it is a matter of changing behaviors and reframing the socio-economic dynamics, both at the individual and the macro level.

Moreover, the current and long-lasting unbalances amongst various communities that inhabit the world in different socio-economic and cultural environments should be considered while pursuing such a goal". In other words, it is important to note that the so-called ecological transition should not be conducted at the expense of the most for the benefit of the few; rather, it should take into account the necessities of social-ecological justice (SCHLOSBERG 2004).

Considering these concerns, the same concept of Anthropocene appears to be a limited framework of interpretation. In his groundbreaking book – *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* – Jason Moore (2016) pointed out that in the Anthropocene, not all the *Anthropos* have the same responsibilities for the amount of damage provoked to the planet. Specifically, he discusses how the ways of producing, consuming, and exchanging commodities embedded in the capitalist socio-economics dynamics are at the root of the crisis of the current era.

Haraway (2016) – in her framework of *Chthulucene* – adds the gender and interspecies perspectives to find new ways of inhabiting the world: she points out the necessity of making *kins* and building alliances amongst human and non-human beings, breaking the dichotomies of nature/culture relations.

In the same critical line, the recent work of Armiero (2021) stresses the idea that the Capitalocene could also be considered the age of waste (Wasteocene), not only in terms of wasted objects but, above all, in terms of wasted relations.

This body of literature – that has been produced and circulated into the international (mainly anglophone) scientific circle – is trying to break the consolidated mainstream approaches to Anthropocene that do not explicitly incorporate strong critical views of the dominant socio-economic model and power structures embedded in the so-called Global North. In other words, such a body of literature – using an explicitly critical approach – questions the effects of the capitalistic model of society on nature/culture relations.

However, beyond the anglophone literature, it is important to note that there are wide streams of knowledge rooted in the cosmologies of indigenous populations in the so-called global south, providing insightful reflections concerned with human/nature relations. Their thoughts radically reverse the mainstream approach concerned with the Anthropocene.

For example, Viveiros De Castro (2013) – moving from what he learned from his ethnography of indigenous populations in Brazil – questions the way the so-called *humans and non-humans* see each other, recalling the concept of *perspectivismo* (perspectivism) as central to understanding the diverse views toward reality, as a central matter for reframing the humans-non humans' interactions.

> "*Perspectivismo* is a term I borrowed from modern philosophical vocabulary to describe a very characteristic aspect of several, if not all, Amerindian cosmologies. It is the notion, first, that the world is populated by many species of beings (in addition to humans) endowed with consciousness and culture, and, second, that each of these species sees itself and the other species in a rather unique way: each one sees itself as human, seeing the others as non-human, as species of animals or spirits. Thus, for example, jaguars see themselves as humans, thus seeing the elements of their universe as if they were cultural objects: for example, the blood of the animals they kill is seen by jaguars as cassava beer, etc. In contrast, jaguars do not see us humans (*naturally* self-perceived as humans by ourselves), as humans, but as prey animals: wild boars, for example. That is why jaguars attack and devour us. As for wild boars (that is, those beings we see as boars), they also see themselves as humans, seeing, for example, the wild fruits they eat as if they were cultivated plants, but they

see us humans as if we were cannibal spirits (as we hunt them and eat them)." (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 2013, p. 36-37)[5]

In De Castro's words, the sight of a jaguar looks at humans from another perspective that should be considered equally dignified in understanding and reflecting upon the diverse beings that inhabit the world and the possibilities to survive the extractive models embedded in current forms of economic growth.

Perspectivism is, in fact, a philosophical approach that considers the centrality of assuming multiple points of observation as crucial for understanding the complexity of reality. It is of relevance both for reflecting upon social museology, urban planning, and their intersections, as it stresses the concept that there are not monolithic ways to interpret and transform reality, but a multiplicity of sights must be considered equally beyond the dominant narratives.

Moving from perspectivism, it is possible to criticize the anthropic focus of the *Anthropocene* in the sense of questioning whether the solutions that the privileged *Anthropo*s is looking for – to overcome the current global crisis – would consider or not (and how) the perspectives of other beings that populate the world. Moreover, perspectivism gives a framework to reflect upon the way of looking at others' views and consider each sight's dignity as a part of a constellation of ontological and epistemic forms. This framework offers an opportunity for reverting the ways of framing the current mainstream definition of the Anthropocene, critically engaging with the same use of the prefix *Anthropos-*.

In this constellation of critical position toward the Anthropocene, Kopenawa & Albert (2010) points out the significance of indigenous thinking (in this case, Yanomami's thinking) in contrast with the mainstream discourse, showing the limitations embedded in it. As such, the book *A queda do céu*[6] (KOPENAWA & ALBERT 2010) offers an autobiographical narration of the shaman Davi Kopenawa, in conversation with the ethnologist Bruce Albert, focused on the tragedy and reaction to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, as a responsibility of the exploitative forms of progress and development. New alliances are thus needed:

> "I wish white people would stop thinking that our forest is dead and that it was put there for nothing. […] I also want their sons and daughters to understand our words and become friends with ours so that they do not grow up in ignorance. Because if the forest is completely devastated, another one will never be born." (KOPENAWA & ALBERT 2010, p. 65)[7]

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[5] Translated in English for the use of this article by the same article's author.
[6] *The fall of the sky.*
[7] See footnote 4.

Through Kopenawa & Albert, the inexorable trajectory of forests' destruction is not only a metaphor, rather it is one of the tangible outcomes of the dominant approach to the exploitation of resources. This is relevant again both for social museology and urban planning when considering these issues as at the core of the most pressing challenges of our times to be addressed at multiple scales, with a variety of tools aimed at increasing awareness and finding practical approaches to reverse such destructive trajectory.

In the same line, the indigenous leader Ailton Krenak – in *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (2019)[8] – points out the necessity of questioning the current understanding of humanity's relationship with the Earth.

> "Meanwhile, humanity is being taken off in such an of this organism that is the earth. The only groups that still consider that they need to stay stuck in this land are those who stayed half-forgotten on the edges of the planet, on the banks of rivers, on the banks of the oceans, Africa, Asia, or Latin America. They are caiçaras, Indians, quilombolas, aborigine *sub-humanity*. Because there is –let's say – *smart humanity*, and a *sub-humanity*, the latter a rougher, more rustic, organic layer of humanity who is stuck in the Earth."
> (KRENAK 2019, p. 11-12)[9]

Krenak invites to reflect on the gap between the mainstream discourse concerned with the Anthropocene and other perspectives: "We are today living the disaster of our time, which some selected people call Anthropocene. The vast majority are calling it social chaos, general mismanagement, loss of quality in daily life, in relationships, and we are all thrown into that abyss" (*Ibid*., p. 34).

Krenak warns us about the leftover, waste, and wasting relations (see also ARMIERO 2021) produced in our current times. His words add a contribution *grounded in the earth*, as in the everyday life of the many people who are "half-forgotten on the edge of the planet" and seek diverse narratives and new opportunities toward which both social museology and urban planning are called to take position and responsibility.

Toward this end, new alliances between various forms of knowledge, disciplines and practices, sights and perspectives, people of the Earth, humans, and non-humans, could be a way out. Still with Krenak: "to quote Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the ecology of knowledge should integrate our everyday experience, inspire our choices about where we want to live, our experience as a community" (*Ibid*., p. 12).

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[8] *Ideas for postponing the end of the world.*
[9] See footnote 4.

In this sense, it is necessary to move from the specificities of each experience in a variety of contexts of the world, bearing in mind the necessity for a common path to find ways to exit the current global crisis.

With these reflections in mind, the next paragraph proposes one of the possible forms of alliances that could contribute to a collective effort to *postpone the end of the world*, at the intersection between the act of critically reflecting upon the past, its signs, and narratives (museology), and the act of organizing spaces, communities, and policies, for building up a diverse future (planning).

2. Possible alliances between museology and urban planning. Defining the core of disciplines and their intersection

The previous paragraph has offered an overview of the debate about the Anthropocene, in an attempt to go beyond the mainstream literature and incorporate a variety of critical accounts that question the dominant discourse.

This paragraph offers some reflections for tracing a path out of the so-called Anthropocene and its nuances through possible alliances between disciplines, practices, and policies.

First (3.1), the legacy of the Santiago of Chile's Round Table (*Mesa Redonda*) is here briefly recalled as a paradigm shift in museology that has generated lessons of interest for scholars, professionals, and activists who are concerned with pressing social and ecological issues, including a reflection on the relations between museums and urbanization (Hardoy, 1972). Then, community-based planning is briefly presented (3.2) as a specular approach with some contact points with the legacy of the *Mesa Redonda*.

Finally (3.3), socially-oriented museums, ecomuseums, and other forms of community-based initiatives are proposed as possible areas of overlaps between the aforementioned forms of museology and planning, to tackle the urgent contemporary challenges that the Anthropocene – with its various nuances – is posing today.

2.1. The legacy of the Mesa Redonda, Santiago de Chile

In 2022, the celebration of the 50 years of the Round Table on the role of museums in Latin America – held in Santiago (Chile) in May 1972 – has been vibrant beyond Latin America itself. Several initiatives[10] have been organized to reflect on the document's legacy

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[10] See for example https://www.museoschile.gob.cl/mesa-redonda-de-santiago/noticias/inauguracion-de-la-conmemoracion-de-la-mesa-redonda-de-santiago, or https://www.minom-portugal.org/xxiv-jornadas-sobre-a-funcao-social-do-museu-peniche/ (last access: June 13, 2022).

produced by museum directors and specialists from different areas in the field of development – including urban planners – together with UNESCO and ICOM representatives[11], gathered at that time to debate the emerging issues for museology.

In 1972, after about ten days of intense work, the Santiago resolution [12] identified challenges and perspectives for the evolution of museums and museology processes in relation to the evolution of societies.

Organized when Salvador Allende governed Chile, the Round Table of Santiago produced a document that was silenced after the coup. However, it has flourished later: today, its legacy has an impact in the international context. It generates new reflections, especially within the Movement for *Nouvelle Muséologie* that was born some years later (MINOM[13]).

Although 50 years have passed, the key points discussed during the round table still teach important lessons to scholars and practitioners, including those acting in the framework of urban planning. It is worthwhile to recall some of them as a base for the argument of this paper, i.e.: the plea for building alliances between disciplines, contexts, practices, and policies to tackle pressing issues of contemporary societies, with a focus on the challenges and legacy of urbanization (HARDOY 1972).

In this respect, the Santiago resolution confirms the following statements :

(1) The need for crossing the boundaries of disciplines. As reported in the preamble of the resolution, "the problems involved in the progress of societies in the contemporary world call for an overall view and integrated treatment of their various aspects; that the solution is not confined to a single science or discipline anymore, then the decision concerning the best solutions and the way of implementing them is not made by a single social group, but rather requires the full, conscious and committed participation of all sections of society (see p. 255 of the resolution, English version).

(2) The focus is on the development of both rural and urban contexts. The resolution engages with local development issues, identifying museums as opportunities for generating awareness concerning specific territorial challenges. This part is of particular interest for those who work with planning, policy-making, and

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[11] The list of participants, their texts and the set of documents produced during the Round Table is published at http://www.ibermuseos.org/en/resources/publications/mesa-redonda-de-santiago-de-chile-1972-vol-2/ (last access: June, 13th, 2022).

[12] In continuity with other reflections produced in those years, such as the International Symposium on Museums in the Contemporary World (held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 1969), recalled in the same Santiago's final report.

[13] http://www.minom-icom.net (last access: June 13, 2022).

correlated disciplines, as it creates a direct nexus between museal processes (as processes for raising awareness), and territorial challenges.

(3) The pivotal role of lifelong education as a matter of emancipation. In this sense, it is possible to trace a direct link with the Freirean approach, which was developed in the same years by the well-known Brazilian thinker (FREIRE 1967), who is also one of the most pivotal references for those planners who work with a community-based approach to empower the most marginalized groups.

It is thus evident how these points – which emerged within the field of museology – are of particular significance for planners as well. To date, in the same years of the Santiago's round table, planners themselves started reflecting upon their role concerning the pressing issues of society, as briefly recalled in the next paragraph.

2.2. Community-based planning

As Leavitt (1982) reports, after the social mobilizations of the 60s and the 70s, emerging criticisms about mainstream planning and dominant discourses led to the formation of a generation of urban planners that explicitly positioned themselves in an attempt to counteract the unbalances and injustices of societies. Specifically,

> "at a meeting held from 8-10 May 1981 in Washington, DC, 150 progressives in planning and allied fields founded the Planners Network. The consensus was reached on a statement of principles, and programs from eight workshop agendas approved or modified (health and human services, community-labor coalitions and local planning, community economic development, housing and neighborhoods, affirmative action, reindustrialization, and urban policy, environmental and growth control, and planning education with subcommittees for students and educators) […] The Planners Network is an 'association', seeking 'fundamental change in our political and economic system', using planning as a 'tool' for redistribution of wealth and power" (LEAVITT 1982, p. 268-271)

The experience of Planners Network is only one example that clarifies, in the field of planning, the same tension and ethos that animated the *Mesa Redonda* in the field of museology.

The arguments in support of community-based approaches to planning arose in the 1960s in an attempt to propose alternatives to authoritarian and top-down planning, far from the needs of people, especially the most marginalized ones. These approaches have their roots in social movements. They have been translated into various forms, such as advocacy

planning aimed at supporting disadvantaged communities (DAVIDOFF 1965), resistance against authorities (GOODMAN 1971), fostering citizens' participation in the decision-making sphere (ARNSTEIN 1969), equity planning (KRUMHOLZ & FORESTER 1990), promoting community organizing (RATHKE 2018) as an opportunity for empowering the most marginalized groups in the planning process (REARDON & FORESTER 2016), etc.

In the Italian context, the echoes of this debate translate into a variety of approaches aimed at opening up the city hall to citizens and tackling territorial challenges with a community-based perspective. One of these approaches emerged as territorialism in the same years of the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre (Brazil), that in Italy influenced the elaboration of *Carta del Nuovo Municipio*[14] (MAGNAGHI ET AL. 2002). This document invites local public bodies to build new alliances with citizens to escape the exogenous control of the global and financial market over local socio-economic relations, finding new ways for acting democracy, in a perspective of solidarity amongst people and territories.

In this stream of thought and practice that emerged in the Italian context, the search for organizational devices able to link the community-based perspective with institutional planning and policymaking opened the way to the rise and development of a variety of instruments and tools based on cooperation amongst local actors.

In the bucket of such tools, from the 90s, ecomuseums started spreading in Italy after having been experimented in various international contexts since the 70s as part of the legacy of Santiago's *Mesa Redonda*.

As recalled sever times, Ecomuseums (DE VARINE 2017) are both the new forms of museologies inspired by the same principle of *Mesa Redonda* and *Nouvelle Muséologie*, as well as one of the attempts for translating community-based initiatives into strategies for local development. The following paragraph offers insights on ecomuseums as practical areas of overlaps between museology and planning.

2.3. Ecomuseums and other forms of community-based initiatives as possible areas of overlap between museology and planning.

In the recent Italian debate on public policies and planning strategies, several scholars highlight the need to overcome sectorial approaches and the importance of integrating thematic areas as well as fostering the proactive role of local communities as agents of change (GISOTTI & ROSSI 2020). Ecomuseums are among those tools. Over the years, they have emerged as forms of territorial governance constructed with a community-based

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[14] *Chart of the New City Hall.*

approach: multi-actor organizational structures aimed at taking care of territorial heritage and landscapes, with various examples in the most marginal contexts[15].

In some cases, they can be considered bottom-up, spontaneous, and insurgent practices, not necessarily linked with institutional dynamics. In other cases, they live in constant tension and conflict between insurgency and institutionalization. Still, in other cases, they have been promoted as institutional initiatives. As such, the spread of ecomuseums[16] in Italy (BORRELLI ET AL. 2008; BARATTI 2012; MURTAS 2013; REINA 2014; D'AMIA 2017, DAL SANTO ET AL. 2017, RIVA 2020, etc.) occurred in different forms and modalities depending on the specificities of the involved contexts and actors.

In terms of relationships with public policies and planning, most of the Italian Regions[17] have issued a Law that specifies the relations between ecomuseums, institutional bodies, processes, networks, and funds. In some cases, like in Apulia, ecomuseums have been well integrated into institutional landscape and heritage planning processes (BARATTI 2020). In other cases, like Sicily, there is a gap between the regional institutional process and the dynamism that emerges within territories (PAPPALARDO 2020).

Ecomuseums could be considered as interesting areas of overlap between:
- the field of museology, having arisen as practices that introduce elements of novelty in the debate concerned with the manifestation, use, narrative, and care of various signs of the past, including territorial heritage;
- the field of planning and public policies, having evolved as areas of experimentation for multi-actor forms of territorial governance constructed with a community-based approach, at least in Italy.

In addition, looking at other contexts in Europe, it is interesting to note that there are also many other initiatives concerned with taking care of the various forms of heritage, valuing the action of the same people living within that heritage. Even if they are not called ecomuseums, they incorporate a similar tension and share similar characteristics in terms of the involvement of people on the ground. Such initiatives could be considered as other pieces of the puzzle in the wide discourse of alliances between disciplines and practices, with the broad aim of fostering a community-based approach to the care of heritage, in its various manifestations. It is the case, for example, of the experience of intentional

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[15] In Italy, several ecomuseums emerged in the rural and internal areas, that suffers the effects of depopulation, but also in urban peripheries or low-income neighbourhoods.

[16] Beyond the academic article, see also the websites of the networks that have been created along the years. For example: https://sites.google.com/view/drops-platform/home; https://www.mondilocali.it; https://sites.google.com/view/ecomuseiitaliani/home (last access: June 13, 2022).

[17] To date, 16 Regions and Autonomous Provinces out of 22 have approved or are in the process of approving a Law that recognizes Ecomuseums, while there is not a National Law.

communities in Norway (SAGER 2018), or eco-social laboratories[18] for managing the commons in Galizia, Spain (FONTÁN BESTILLEIRO ET AL. 2021), that have been detected[19] as other ways for taking care of various forms of heritage, may they be in urban or rural areas. It is important to note that the forms of heritage recalled here could be very diverse (from working-class houses in urban areas to forests or wetlands in rural areas), as well as the ways to take care of them. However, at the baseline, there is the necessity for valuing what matters from the past, fostering an ethos of socio-ecological justice for the future.

The implications of this argument for the broad question that this paper has tried to investigate – why and how, is it urgent to intersect (eco)socially-oriented museology and planning – are discussed in the following paragraph.

3. Discussion: notes for a joint research program

The journey across ecomuseums and other initiatives in Europe – in dialogue with some lessons that come from Latin America (Santiago's *Mesa Redonda* and its legacy) and North America (the experience of *Planners Network*) – has been here just briefly reported in the forms of the first set of notes that need to be further systematized. However, some preliminary reflections can be discussed regarding ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and policy recommendations.

In terms of ontologies, before entering the specific debate concerned with heritage, I urged to clarify the various nuances of the discussion regarding the Anthropocene (CRUTZEN 2006), considering not only the mainstream debate but also the critical accounts (MOORE 2016; HARAWAY 2016; ARMIERO 2021, etc.), that explicitly emphasize the critics to the dominant socio-economic capitalistic model. Above all, this article refers to the ones that come from indigenous ontologies (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 2013; KOPENAWA & ALBERT 2010; KRENAK 2019, etc.), that are not diffusely recalled in the anglophone literature. Such critical debate opens a reflection in terms of the broad question concerned with the way "*we" inhabit the world*, considering "we" as an inclusive and polyhedric subject, posing questions of justice, wasting relations, humans and non-humans' perspectives, as other ways for reframing the mainstream discourse on the Anthropocene, and finding viable alternatives to it.

These challenges require looking for reframed ways of producing knowledge and actions that cannot be caged inside the 20th century's ways of doing disciplinary science only within the privileged circle of academia.
The challenges of the current times require other epistemologies and methodologies, intersecting disciplines, opening them to the variety of knowledge and actions that are

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[18] *Laboratorio Ecosocial do Barbanza.*
[19] These cases have observed and investigated within the PON AIM research process (see footnotes 1 and 2).

incorporated into various practices on the ground. The tension of working with a community-based and integrated perspective has already emerged in multiple fields, including some approaches to museology and planning recalled in paragraph 3.

The discourses and practices around ecomuseums (DE VARINE 2017) are examples of such tension. The emerging practices of ecomuseums – here explored with a focus on the Italian context – have been used as an example for pointing out the already existing overlaps between disciplines, as well as between academia and the world outside it.

In addition, it has been pointed out that there is more beyond the same label of ecomuseums, if ones consider the various forms of relations (and actions) between people and the variegated manifestations of heritage (in urban and rural environments), as stated with the final cited examples (SAGER 2018; FONTÁN BESTILLEIRO ET AL. 2021), that are not called ecomuseums but share a tension of socio-ecological justice (SCHLOSBERG 2004).

What has been discussed so far has implications in terms of policy recommendations. This article calls for an integration of policies able to go beyond the sectorial understanding and the current organizational structure of public offices.

Considering what has been discussed so far, a static and monolithic division between spheres of knowledge is not helpful in grasping and – above all – nurturing the various acts of care that come from the ground. In this sense, further exploration is needed to find a structured way of integrating issues and actions, not only in the academic debate but also in practice and the policy arena.

Conclusion

This article has presented some preliminary notes elaborated within a research project that moved from the question of democratizing the approaches for taking care of territorial heritage and marginal landscapes from a community-based perspective. It has explored the potential of working at the frontier between museology and urban planning, while questioning the mainstream approaches to the Anthropocene, proposing ontological and epistemological alternatives.

Based on an extensive literature review in both fields of knowledge and action, the need to open the disciplinary boundaries and work for intersections emerges. As discussed so far, it is necessary to start from the possible forms of community-based actions for taking care of heritage and propose a revised research program in terms of reframed ontologies and epistemologies (DE CASTRO 2013; KOPENAWA & ALBERT 2010; KRENAK 2019) aiming at producing policy recommendations based on integrated and critical perspectives.

Such intersections represent a possible trajectory and research program for exiting the current injustices of the Anthropocene in its various nuances (MOORE 2016; HARAWAY 2016; ARMIERO 2021). Ecomuseums (DE VARINE 2017) are examples that show some practical attempts at intersections in the purse of a new alliance between community-based museology and urban planning that could open out new windows of opportunities for the urgent challenges of the 21st century.

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