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Postindustrial valleys: the Pyrenees as a reinvented landscape

Contemporary Pyrenean landscapes, in Northeast Spain, are a complex mixture of social and ecological variables. In the same string of peaks and valleys we encounter state-of-the-art ski resorts, transhumant sheep herds, coal mines, forest guards' stations and groups of backpackers. The current landscapes are the outcome of a recent and unfinished wave of territorial appropriation lead by urban economic and cultural interests. In this article I describe the existing landscapes, link them to a specific political, economic and ideological background, and connect them with an historical and socioeconomic genealogy. This requires a discussion on sociocultural change and its tangible manifestations over the Pyrenean landscape (Boneta 2004; Sabartés 1998; Tulla 1982).

My own fieldwork located in the Valley of Lillet pushed me to consider social change in the hinterland of a developed country. The Valley of Lillet lies in the northern corner of the province of Barcelona. This area, the High Berguedà, is crossed by the Cadí-Moixeró range, part of the foothills of the Catalan Pyrenees. This Valley constitutes a paradigmatic example of a declining rural area in the aftermath of a deindustrialisation process.

In this article I describe the transformations endured by an industrialized rural landscape once most factories and mines had closed. This industrial collapse of Western montane industries was triggered by the development of better and faster infrastructures that led to the current process of globalisation. Thus, this hypermodernity resulted in the drastic reduction of the economic incentives that sustained this industrial landscape. The emerging postindustrial landscape is dominated by a process of depopulation, and the massive implementation of protected areas and tourism infrastructures. In other words, the social and economic model that seems to be consolidating in the Pyrenees is dominated by a service economy geared to provide services to visitors from the urban lowlands. These visitors are practising tourism and searching for leisure. Postmaterialist values then, are informing the current transformation of the landscape (Inglehart 1997). As industrialism is at the core of modernity, its collapse in the form of a postindustrial landscape sets the stage for the emergence of a particular type of postmodern landscape with an economy revolving around services covering postmaterialist needs.

After a few months of fieldwork collecting life stories and digging through local archives, it seemed to me that I had come across an ideal example of historical transition from a pre-modern traditional agricultural society to a highly industrialized, completely modern valley articulated around a few main factories (Arqué et al. 1982; Noguera 1992). It appeared to be a suitable context in which to study social change and economic transition. To complete this perfect historical scheme, the collapse of this industrial
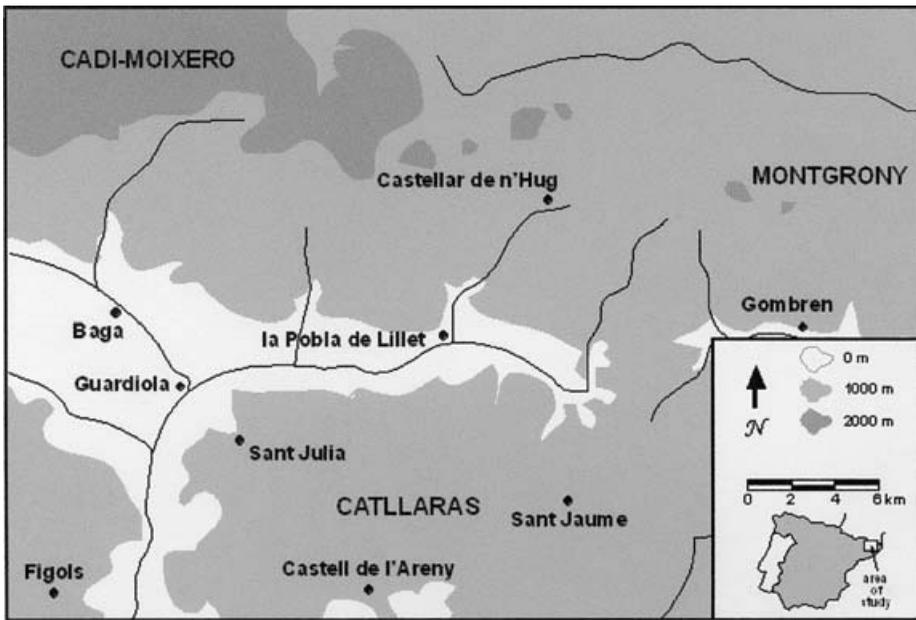
FIGURE 1. *Map of the Valley of Lillet, northeast Berguedà (map prepared by Jennie Deo).*

world during the 'seventies and the' eighties seemed to point to the next massive social change. The general social, demographic and economic decay of the area facilitated progressive appropriation of the landscape by the state and urban capital in order to implement new uses of the territory deeply marked by leisure and environmentalist values. This second transitional phase would clearly complete our holistic, apparently globally useful, historical scheme: the advent of postmodernity as a remaking of an agonizing modernity.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I had no doubt about the adequacy of this historical scheme. Oral history, orthodox explanations of available demographic records and economic accounts were seemingly corroborating point-by-point this neat historical succession. The most striking data were coming from ethnographic interviews. Old farmers and their descendants were unmistakably certain of the peace and tranquillity that had been lost with the abandonment of the rural way of life. This traumatic social concession to adapt to modern ways was still fresh in their collective memory.

The fundamental subjects of this specific romantic essentialisation, the traditional peasants, were demonstrating a firm belief in a golden, static past characterized by social harmony: 'Things were different back then. Granted it was a hard life, but we had everything we needed'.[1] The interviews and the historic records were showing a lively, but also frozen, landscape.

1   Personal quotes are all translated from Spanish or Catalan by the author.

> (In) the area around la Pobla one sees constant work, because they cultivate places that seem desperate, they build costly walls, putting one over the other, from the feet of the most elevated mountains to their summits, it looks more a stairway than cultivated land. (Zamora 1973 [1789])

Each slope of these valleys was clearly defined in social terms through its connection to the different houses that were working – taking care of – them. Social memory, when forced to go back to the rural past, seemed to get stuck in a specific moment in time, universalising it. Ex-peasants, when asked to recall their times on the isolated farms, up by the passes, did not focus on deprivation, winter isolation, family repression and so on. Instead, they focused on the pastoral ideal centred on a beautiful landscape, social harmony and self-sufficiency.

This social melancholy, if you want, reappears also in relation to an agonizing industrial world. The villages of this postindustrial landscape are packed with ex-factory workers from the once ubiquitous textile factories, the mines and the all-powerful gigantic concrete factory. What the workers and the rest of the population are missing is the quasi-urban centrality that la Pobla de Lillet had achieved during those days, the sense of busyness that the now silent village had once attained.

> At some point, people were renting the hallways of their houses to entire families. There was no space in the village. We were buzzing with life. No locked houses, no barred windows back then.

> People used to come here to celebrate the feast days and fairs and to get married. At that time we were even a women's village. Plenty of people from places like Berga and Ripoll[2] were coming to find partners, a wife. That was important.

> La Pobla, back then (1904), had an epoch with a lot of euphoria and prosperity; besides three textile factories that were there, the concrete Asland factory joined the village and the lignite mines of the Catllaras too. (Noguera 1992)

A strong sense of collective identity is associated to the values brought about by modernity (Nugent 1997). Identity is a complex intellectual and emotional structure that reworks past collective and individual traits in terms of present needs and constraints. The informants were expressing a very complex feeling composed of pride in what once there was, sadness for what was lost, and anger with what they perceived as social deception. They do not understand what went wrong. They worked as they were supposed to and they lost it all to a foreign abstraction called globalisation. They consider that someone out there did not respect all the conditions of Modernity's contract. They complied, but urban-led society did not conform to their expectations. This frustration rooted in the inability to cope with emerging socioeconomic transformations is always an important component of any postindustrial landscape (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Ferguson 1999).

A rural postindustrial locale is often marked by this double melancholy that is in itself a contradiction; on the one hand, the traditional past is missed as an idyllic historical moment, on the other hand, this ideal cohabits with another essentialisation about the dynamism and vivacity of industrial life at its peak. Thus, the same landscape is selectively reconstructed by each of the individuals that interact with it, depending on their position. There is also a clear generational gap that relates these melancholies to the socialisation process. A high percentage of old people were socialized in an agricultural society, while most middle-aged villagers were brought up as industrial workers. As one

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2 The capitals of the two neighboring districts.

of my informants once said, accompanied by the approbatory mumbling and nodding of the rest of the bar's customers, who stopped all conversations to listen to the interview: 'Once a miner, always a miner. You cannot become anything else. You will die a miner'. All of them, interestingly enough, were middle-aged retired miners living off miners' pensions.

Social ideals can thus be associated with differentiated processes of socialisation. Landscape analysis requires the consideration of this multivocality in order to understand all its complexity (Raffles 1999).

Convinced by these strong beliefs in social decay, I initially did not subject my data to further scrutiny. I limited myself to recording the precise demographic successions that, since the mid-nineteenth century, seemed to be confirming range depopulation, concentration in industrial towns, and finally general flight from the valley. To some extent, by essentializing and using the local perspective I was constructing a regressive historical scheme in classical Greek style: a nostalgic perspective of history in which every period is a little bit worse than one before and incomparably worse than a mythical golden age in which everything was perfect.

Although this model has yielded abundant analytical benefits, its core mechanics must be questioned. Territories and societies do not simply transit in block from one period to another. Some groups or individuals do shift to 'more modern' ways of life, but some do not. And it does not seem advisable to plainly dismiss those that did not follow the modernizing trend as anomalies or relics doomed to disappear. Ranchers, peasants, miners and factory workers have not disappeared, even if it is true that in this hyper-modern era of connectedness there are fewer incentives for them to stay in business.

Centuries after the emergence of the first theoretically modern social traits, the landscape is still packed with individuals whose way of life is considered by some as non-modern or traditional: ways of life characterised by productive practices from a supposedly bygone era. Who is to say that they are not supposed to be there, that their lack of modernity questions their legitimacy as our contemporaries? Independently of their way of life, all individuals occupying the current landscape are equally deserving of being called contemporary and equally representative of the current historical moment. *Simultaneity,* thus, understood as the articulated cohabitation of elements from supposedly different historical and social periods, seems to be a more fitting descriptor than transition.

In order to understand the contemporary landscape, this article examines, first, the process of postmodern appropriation of the landscape, and second, several instances of the survival of 'past' elements. I situate these elements in the current landscape not just geographically but also as contemporary, perfectly rational, structures or behaviour. Through this process I hope to provide data with which to critically analyse the current process of urban appropriation of the Catalan mountains.

Postindustriality

In the Catalan Pyrenees, postmodern transformations deepened some of the trends initiated by the industrialisation of the range. Modernisation, which entailed the establishment of mines, infrastructures and factories along the river courses, attracted large numbers of people to the valleys and connected their productive systems to larger consumer networks (Arqué et al. 1982; Boneta 2003). This also resulted in the

TABLE 1. *Long-term evolution of the population. La Pobla de Lillet. (Source:* Gran Geografia Comarcal de Catalunya. *Barcelona: Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana 1991–1996.)*

Year	Number of Inhabitants	Year	Number of Inhabitants
1708	732	1939	1912
1719	716	1940	2169
1787	1326	1945	2148
1847	1287	1950	2398
1857	2140	1955	2559
1877	1490	1960	2732
1897	1363	1965	2718
1900	1340	1970	2502
1905	1334	1975	2034
1910	1688	1980	2003
1916	1791	1985	1915
1920	2424	1990	1830
1925	2350	1995	1690
1930	2384	2000	1422
1935	2316		

depopulation of the ranges. A significant percentage of farms and fields were abandoned. The population of the area did not decrease in absolute terms; its inhabitants relocated to the towns of the valleys. The closure of mines and factories during the decade following the oil crises of the 1970s extended the process of depopulation from the ranges to the valleys.

In the Valley of Lillet and neighbouring areas, the upper watershed of the Llobregat River, competition from South African coal, Moroccan textiles and lowland infrastructures stripped industrial activities away from the mountains. The globalisation of the economy, reinforced by low transportation costs, low wages and the lack of labour and environmental regulations in Third World countries, took competitive advantages away from the montane industrial complexes. The delocalisation of the global economic system stripped the inlands of the Western countries of a large part of their industrial infrastructures.

From a demographic standpoint this process of deindustrialisation translated into an intense emigration that resulted in acute depopulation. Table 1 and figure 2 illustrate this process in detail for the town of la Pobla de Lillet during the twentieth century, the nerve-centre of the Valley of Lillet. There are two sharp demographic increases during the twentieth century.[3] These changes happened during the first and third quarters of the century and corresponded with two phases of industrial intensification.[4] The growing tendency reached a final peak in 1960. A short stagnation followed and the massive emigration began. After the 1970s, coinciding with the closure of factories and mines, the declining trend consolidated and has not yet stopped.

3   The peak of the 1860s was a general demographic anomaly present in most of the Pyrenean range, and as yet unexplained. Such a sudden increase is hardly explicable through natural growth. The area does not present, at that time, immigration fluxes. Changes in data-gathering methodology may explain this irregularity.
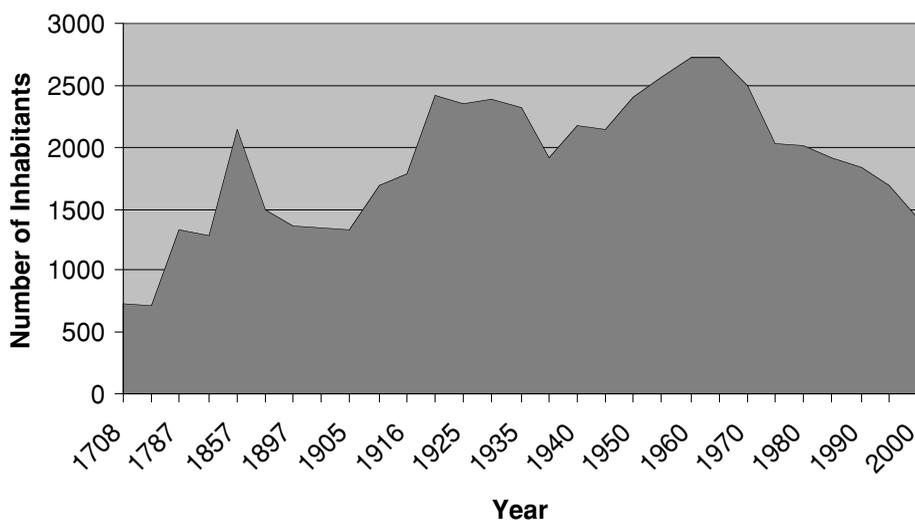4   The decline during the late 1930s is due to the effects of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).

FIGURE 2. *Long-term evolution of the population. La Pobla de Lillet. (Source:* Gran Geografia Comarcal de Catalunya. *Barcelona: Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana 1991–1996.)*

This process set the stage for the postmodern take-over. Abandoned mountains and slopes experienced an environmental transformation: ploughed fields were slowly covered by bush and forest, and empty farms and factories steadily crumbled.

The widespread adoption of environmental values in Spain, coinciding with the passing of the Franco regime and its political and economic approach based on development and land speculation, changed the way public institutions thought about natural resource management. The emergence of postmaterialistic values paved the way for the public and private commodification of nature in aesthetic terms (Inglehart 1997). Aestheticism and leisure became the urban needs that the mountains could supply.

Although this reconfiguration of the economic activities of the area halted part of the demographic bleeding, demographic fluxes became seasonal, connected to activities with high market value for urban citizens but low monetary continuity for local economies. The seasons for skiing, mushroom picking, summer holidays and hunting, instead of the wheat harvesting or shearing, became the seasonal activity peaks. These interludes of frenetic activity were obviously connected to periodic urban influxes. In many respects the mountains become socially urbanised. Although many infrastructures were built in strategic enclaves, this urbanisation was not focused on building construction, except in the areas surrounding ski resorts. The mountains are reworked, physically, culturally and discursively to answer to the needs and expectations of urban visitors. In other words, the main purpose of these mountains is no longer to provide a place to live in, but a place to visit. In the densely populated and hyper-industrialized Western countries 'wilderness' is a scarce commodity. The abandoned mountainous areas in process of natural recovery were discursively reconstructed into untamed nature, into wilderness (Arnold 1996; Cronon 1996).

This approach to the commodification of dramatic nature, however, neglects a basic element. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned process of acute depopulation these mountains are still densely populated. To unquestionably assume this unilateral
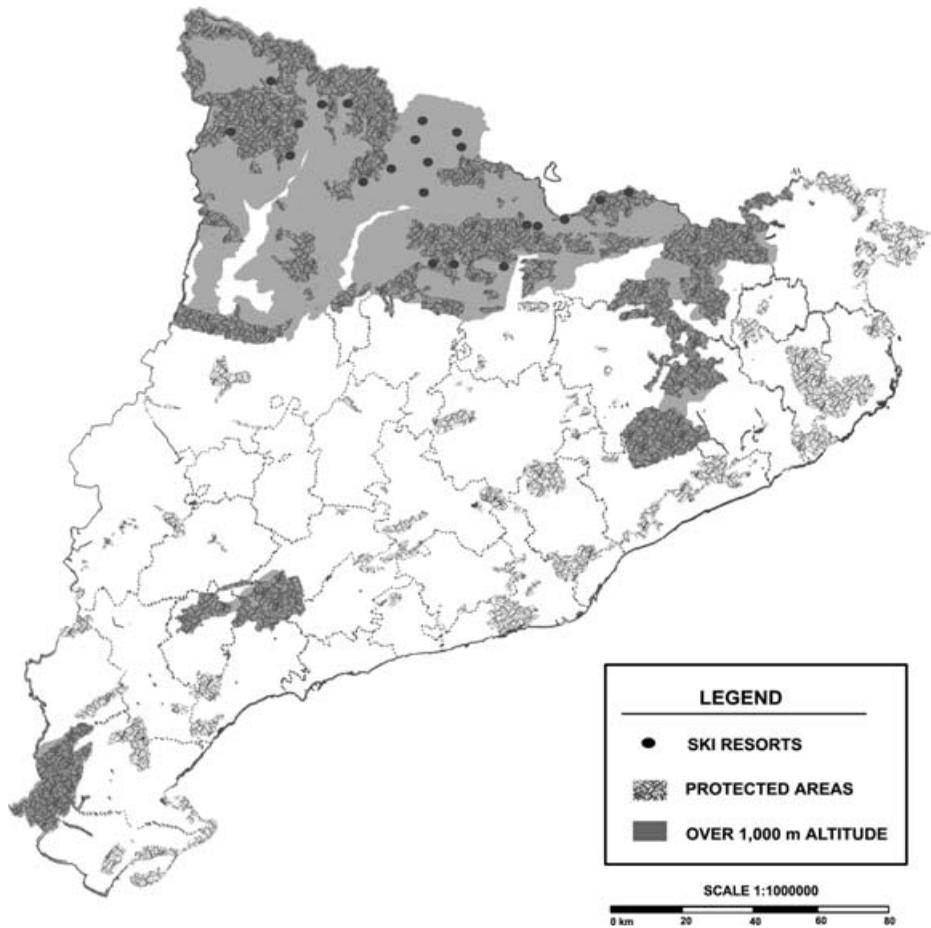
FIGURE 3. *Topography and location of protected areas and ski resorts in Catalonia (map prepared by Laura Zanotti).*

urbanisation of the mountainous landscapes would imply blatantly disregarding local perspectives and agency.

In Catalonia, ski resorts have become an important economic sector that stretches the tourist season across all four seasons. Ski resorts are important economic enterprises, the social, ecological and economic effects of which extends way beyond the physical premises of the ski fields. These resorts require territory, legal permits and infrastructure including roads, water management and residences.

Figure 3 depicts the distribution of ski resorts in Catalonia and the location of most protected areas. The map also correlates parks and ski resorts with altitude. The high density of ski resorts in the Pyrenees results in large areas devoted to such activities and its associated needs. Ski resorts have large ecological, social and economic footprints over the territory. Significant portions of the rural areas are transformed to cover predominantly urban needs. In areas neighbouring the resorts, as the map shows, lie dozens of parks and reserves. There is a good correlation between ski resorts and

conservation areas with high altitudes. To the urban eye of the postindustrial era the upper parts of the ranges look socially empty and unused. Population densities are comparatively low, and economic uses seem antiquated and inefficient. This situation has traditionally opened those ranges to public policies (conservation) and capital (ski resorts).

This map, which only reflects the Spanish side of the mountains, illustrates that the combination of ski resorts and protected areas covers a remarkably large part of the Catalan Pyrenees. This phenomenon implies a considerable penetration of urban capital, values and priorities.

Several elements seem to have contributed to make mountainous areas more susceptible to appropriation and reconstruction. The mountains offer a unique combination of social and natural elements. I have already mentioned that the mountains, after the fading away of traditional productive practices and the collapse of factories, mines and timber industry, were in an process of acute depopulation and that the decrease of human pressure resulted in a recovery of the forest and non-agricultural ecosystems. This was accelerated by national conservation initiatives. Furthermore, the property regimes in place in the mountains form a complex amalgam of ownership types that, for complex historical reasons, include large extensions of collective property, communal and state owned (Vaccaro 2005).

The Valley of Lillet is a place deeply affected by this process of postmodernisation. In recent years the mountains of the Valley of Lillet have become natural and cultural reservoirs. As shown in figure 4 important areas of its municipalities are under some level of environmental protection. The Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park, the main conservation area of the region, formed in 1983, encompasses 3,300 of the 4,676 hectares of Castellar de n'Hug, 3,934 of 6,200 hectares of Guardiola de Berguedà, 3,512 of 4,299 of Bagà, and 2,330 of la Pobla de Lillet. The Montgrony Range Natural Space, established in 2000, affects 620 hectares more of Castellar de n'Hug. Finally, the Catllaràs Range Natural Space, also established in 2000, covers 2,330 of the 5,123 hectares of la Pobla de Lillet and 660 of 1,230 hectares of Sant Julià de Cerdanyola. In summary, 82.8 per cent of Castellar de n'Hug, 81.6 per cent of Bagà, 45.4 per cent of la Pobla de Lillet,[5] 63.5 per cent of Guardiola de Berguedà, and 50.4 per cent of Sant Julià de Cerdanyola are under some level of formal environmental protection (see figure 4).

Environmental protection policies are designed and implemented by technical specialists designated by central political institutions (Wilshusen et al. 2002). The entire process is marked by state-driven appropriation and territorialisation of resources, often resulting in enclosure and exclusion or limitation of local uses (Moore 1998; Neumann 1998; Saberwal and Rangajaran 2003).

The inherent goals of protected areas are biodiversity conservation or enhancement. A collateral consequence of the protected areas is the expansion and consolidation of the state's direct control over certain geographical areas and their resources. In any case, the rationale behind their proclamation serves needs and perceived needs developed extra-locally in urban centres. Postmaterialistic needs have not emerged in rural settings, but amongst urban dwellers longing for natural experiences on weekends and holidays. The appreciation of nature and cultural heritage, in Catalonia and elsewhere, has a

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5   With the planned expansion of the Cadi-Moixero Natural Park this percentage will soon reach 61.3 per cent.
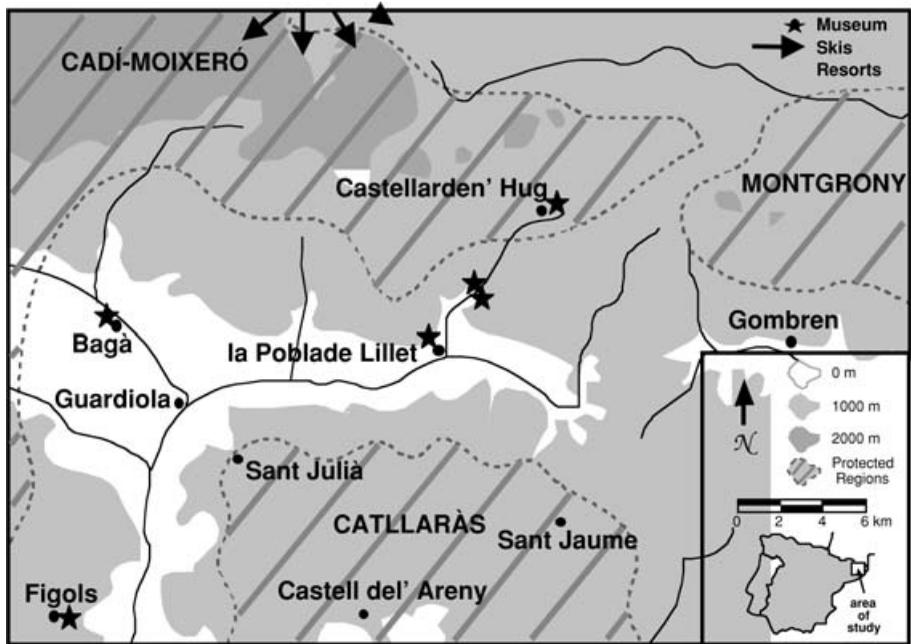
FIGURE 4. *Protected areas, museums, ski resort and tourist train around the Valley of Lillet (map prepared by Jennie Deo).*

well-documented genealogy that connects the consolidation of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dilettante aristocracy first, and the bourgeoisie later, with romanticism and folklorism (Darby 2000; Nogué and Vicente 2004).

The implementation and consolidation of the natural areas was followed closely by the opening of thematic museums in the area (see figure 4): The Shepherd Museum, the Concrete Factory Museum, the Train Museum and the Mines Museum. Museums are institutions devoted to preserving and divulging 'cultural patrimony'. The four institutions mentioned above are intended to preserve the fading knowledge related to activities that once were an essential part of the local landscape. Interestingly enough, some of the activities and knowledge that these museums are attempting to protect and divulge are related not only to the traditional agrarian and ranching practices but also to the industrial past of the valleys. Thus, the 'golden age' is far from being an uncontroversial idea.

The Shepherd Museum, for instance, carefully describes an idealised traditional way of life. It explains to the tourists and children participating in educational fieldtrips a way of life that has mostly become history. Shepherds, however, still roam the Cadí Mountains slopes. Some inhabitants of Castellar de n'Hug and la Pobla still stubbornly wander with their sheep. The caretakers of these herds use cell phones and do not hesitate to use trucks to transport their animals. Likewise, in the Berguedà a few hundred individuals still descent daily into the dark guts of the coal mines. Interestingly enough, however, all of them have been declared extinct or in process of extinction and, consequently, they have been *patrimonialised* and turned into material for museum exhibits. The area, its inhabitants, their history and economy endure a process of museisation.

Globalisation of the world economy has rendered many occupations of the Western inlands economically inefficient, and, as a result, they have been abandoned. Trees have reoccupied abandoned fields and weeds have overtaken the crumbling roofs of deserted farms and factories. The consolidation and expansion of forests has facilitated the discursive transformation of agricultural or industrial areas into untamed nature in need of protection. The protected areas established in the surroundings of the Valley of Lillet include forests that have grown over agricultural terraces and summer pastures that have been used for centuries. The Catalan Law for Natural Spaces that frames the regulation of these protected areas however, states that:

> By natural spaces we understand those that present one or several ecosystems not essentially transformed by exploitation and human occupation, with vegetal or animal species of scientific or educational interest and those that present natural landscapes of aesthetic values. (Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya 1985: 2114)[6]

However, the landscape of the mountains has not been rendered devoid of social significance to mainstream national society. The museisation and naturalisation processes mentioned earlier prove that it is reconstructed into a natural and a cultural reservoir. The mountains and those who dwell there become the patrimony and history of the nation as a whole.

This process of transformation of the rural landscape into a leisure supermarket for urban populations manifests itself around the eastern part of the Cadí range in yet another symptom. The north face of the Cadí range harbours two large ski resorts: la Molina and la Masella. The total of more than 100 kilometres of runs gives them a large ecological footprint, and an even larger effect on the urbanisation of the Cerdanya Valley.[7] Skiing is a mass phenomenon that has important consequences for local economic development although it is mostly sustained by the influx of urban consumers. The capital necessary for the implementation of such projects is rarely available in rural settings.

A final element to be included into this overview of significant transformations of landscape and productive activities is the fact that most villages in the area invest large amounts of energy and considerable resources in the organisation of events designed to attract visitors to the area. These events are usually connected to some local asset that can be marketed to specific sectors of the urban population. This is not to say that these events are organised solely to please strangers. They undoubtedly serve more than one purpose. The organisation of such activities galvanises social dynamism, entertains locals and visitors alike, and, in some cases, reproduces longstanding traditions. Tradition is, often, reinvented to reconfigure local identity and to provide new tourist assets that may reinforce local development (Frigolé 2005). In the area around the Valley of Lillet we can mention, amongst others, the mushroom party in la Pobla de Lillet, the Middle Ages representations in Bagà, or the sheepdog contest in Castellar de n'Hug. These events can be interpreted either as a final surrender of local communities to the commercialisation of their history and traditions, or as an imaginative strategy of these same communities that allows them to take advantage of new global markets. In these new global markets, packaged 'traditional culture' sells.

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6   Diari Oficial de la Generalitat (DOG): Official Journal of the Generalitat (regional autonomous government).
7   Cerdanya Valley is located north of the Lillet Valley in the other side of the Cadí Range.

In sum, although locals are unquestionably aware of the permanence of all sorts of occupations on their mountains and slopes, their discourses depict villages that are not traditional or industrial any more. At this point in history, this new period is still defined by what has been lost. The word decay is often used. The fall of modernity has coincided with depopulation and aging, a true demographic collapse. To many, this reinvention of their place is synonymous with social extinction. This trend, however, is slightly different when we interview young people. Amongst them tourism is not just an unfair imposition, it is an opportunity for local development. A postmodern landscape is a territory characterized by an urban appropriation of land and resources directed at covering postmaterialistic needs. These needs and uses are mostly related to leisure and tourism.

This article describes this double transition in the Valley of Lillet focusing on the recent emergence of protected areas, ski resorts and cultural museums. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Valley of Lillet and surrounding environs have at least three protected areas, a couple of ski resorts and several museums. A case can be made, then, that the Valley of Lillet is in a clear transition from an industrial to a postmodern landscape.

Contradictions

I am at the top of the pass, by the road, sitting on a rock facing south, enjoying one of last warm days of the summer. The car that gave me a ride just disappeared beyond a curb on the other side of the range. This is a very interesting place. On my left, to the east, the range is mostly alpine grasslands: good grazing terrain, rounded summits and soft slopes. On my right, to the west, things are different. The North face is steep and densely forested. The higher peaks of this side of the range are clustered in this area. The Southern side, Rus Mountain, has several areas extremely suitable for grazing. A couple of hundred meters down the slope, in the southern side, I can see barbwire and the fence that closes off the natural park territory. A few hundred meters to the West, by the road, there is a parking lot with capacity for almost one hundred cars. This infrastructure provides service to the nearby ski resort. The forested slopes have tracks stripped of trees. These paths that in winter are white with snow and packs of skiers are now green and full of grass. I am waiting in silence. Gradually, a characteristic sound becomes audible: sheep bells. From between the trees, black pines, a herd emerges and with it its shepherd and three dogs. A couple of hundred sheep and a handful of goats slowly make their way down through the ski strip, under the lift cable.

In this entry in my own field journal, tradition (the transhumant herd) and postmodernity (the ski station and the leisure economy that it incarnates) unexpectedly coincided in the same scene. Down in the valley, factories – that is modernity – and museums – postmodernity – share the same buildings. In these places, as in many other instances, simultaneity, more than transition, exemplifies the social landscape. None of these elements, I argue, should be understood as out of time, or at least not only so. Each one of these social formations has a contemporary reading that actualises them. They are appropriated by postmodernity without totally losing their previous layers of meaning. In other words, transhumant shepherds are at the same time representatives of a way of life developed centuries ago, historical and ethnological patrimony, as well as a totally rational contemporary economic strategy that combines productivity with the extraction of subsidies.

Transition, social change and industrial transformation hence seem to be the foundations of the advent of modernity. The concept of simultaneity, although it does

not completely refute the transitional approach, at least, refines it by admitting the cohabitation of a highly heterogeneous amalgam of social elements and processes.

One of the most pervasive essentialisations of the early critical discourses on modernity is the insistence on the lack of options for the local populations in the face of these changes. Local agency, however, manifests itself in many ways: resistance, transformation, negotiation, connivance or denial (Guha 2000; Gupta 1998; Scott 1985; Sivaramakrishnan 1999). The relentless permanence of diverse social elements across different historical times tells us a great deal about historical change and social conceptualisation. It shows that clear-cut socio-historical periods constitute a fictitious but convenient and necessary scheme to think about human development. After all, we all think in terms of past, present and future.

Modernity, with its forestry policies, hydroelectric schemes and state sponsored industrialisation, had been characterised by a higher level of state control and repression. Postmodern times, on the other hand, seem to rely on consensus between state and civil society, multipurpose landscapes, globalised economic networks and the emergence of leisure as a central element of economic productivity.

In the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries transhumant herds were ubiquitous across these valleys. One hundred years of state-driven policies targeting the resources of the area affected the traditional ways of life. As a result, the presence of transhumant herds has declined steadily. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when summer hits the alpine pastures thousands of sheep congregate up in the Cadí range. There are fewer herds, but, for the most part, they are larger. In the Valley the population has declined and not all households depend on ranching any more. Benefits depend on size of the herd and public subsidies. Ranchers rarely rely exclusively on ranching. Ranching thus remains an active occupation, but changes to adapt to the new social order.

Problems arise when potential uses of the landscape are, or are perceived as, incompatible. For years, conservation efforts, for instance, have been seen as limitations to traditional ranching. In the Pyrenees, projects like the reintroduction of the brown bear outrage locals. 'This is ridiculous. It is like succeeding in putting all the criminals in jail, just to let them go again'. This project is a paradigmatic example of an idea of 'nature' imposed from the urban outside with little or no input from the local communities.

Across history there is a constant element: the locals' will to survive and their capacity to adapt to the different particularities that have characterised the place throughout history. In one sense, I feel compelled to revisit a formalist definition of economy. According to such a theoretical perspective, economy is defined as the management of scarce resources in which individuals attempt to maximise benefits while minimising costs. This is a minimalist definition of economy as rational management that seems to adapt well to understanding simultaneity. However, it is obviously not enough to fully understand the economic life of the Valley. For this, a more substantivist approach to economic structures is needed. The point is that when local individuals shift from a factory job to a service occupation, they are not necessarily adopting postmaterialistic or postmodern values (Harvey 2001; Inglehart 1997). They are scanning economic possibilities at hand and choosing their occupation with a maximising intent.

When villages create museums or organise events based on a patrimonial perspective of their history or their uncertain present, they are not necessarily buying into the

museisation of their daily life, or the protection of their ancestral knowledge. They are reorganising their past in order to cover present needs and to create future expectations. Local councils, businesses and individuals are also consciously tapping resources from a globalised market that values the product that they can offer: history, nature and tradition (Frigolé 2005).

Throughout history these mountainous communities have demonstrated extraordinary skills for recognising novelties and change. These skills have often allowed them also to take advantage of these transformations. This type of adaptive behaviour has numerous historical precedents. When at the turn of the twentieth century the heirs of farms started to send their siblings down to the Valley to work in the factories, they were attempting to introduce new resources into their diversified but fragile household economy. In the traditional kinship system of this part of the country in all cases the heir was the first-born male. The remaining siblings had the right to stay at the house under their brother's authority. They were working for the farm without pay, in order to gain their right to food and shelter. When these youngsters decided to leave the ranges and farms and permanently settle near the factories, away from their brother's authority, they were searching for an improvement in their own situation instead of remaining to support their older brother's family. By abandoning the farm, they joined the individualistic ideological framework of the wage economy. By leaving the household they escaped the bundle of obligations associated with the traditional kinship system and, consequently, they were able to keep for themselves the wages produced by their work.

Nowadays, when the village locals establish mountain guide businesses they are covering an emergent external demand. They are not necessarily assuming the environmentalist and pastoral values of their customers, mostly urban dwellers. Local entrepreneurs are doing business with visitors and meeting their needs, thus continuing the rational choices their predecessors made in different, previous conjunctures.

In addition, the survival of transhumance cannot be explained solely by the stubbornness of a few shepherds stuck in the old ways. The arrival of European Union subsidies and the depopulation of the area have left a large amount of vacant land with relatively low competition and a steady, if not considerable, flow of monetary income. Interestingly enough, the big shepherds are currently making more profit from subsidies than from the meat or wool produced by the animals. Taking into account the scarce resources of the area, this is, again, a rational adaptation, in terms of market economy, to the possibilities and constraints of the local economy.

When cattle herding recently emerged as an economic alternative in an area in economic decay, it was not just a revival of an ancestral tradition. It was an adaptive answer to a change in the political culture of particular institutions: the park management, under political pressure, reached an agreement with local councils and local cattle owners and opened previously forbidden grazing areas to their animals. The new reorganisation of labour, based on economies of scale, also allowed cattle owners to stay at their previous occupations while keeping cattle as a part-time job. Furthermore, in order to organise this new economic activity the locals from two villages created a communal institution. A social institution, often considered traditional and uneconomical, was reinvented and re-crafted to answer to contemporary needs. Again, a trait attributed to past social formations escapes its assumed historical scope and spreads meaningfully over the present. Simultaneity then, seems to be the more appropriate concept to depict this cohabitation of social traits derived from different historical

periods. These social traits are in continuous discursive and physical transformation due to all sort of internal and external pressures.

All these examples characterise an essential quality of the mountains' economy. The scarcity and relative unpredictability of montane natural resources has resulted in households focused on diversification. This trait, easily perceptible in the organisation of traditional farms, has remained constant until these postmodern times in which ranching, industry and services are simultaneously present in many homes.[8]

Conclusion

Mountainous areas and postindustrial landscapes are far from frozen or decomposing territories. The goal of this article has been to identify the most important socio-economic processes happening in areas supposedly suffering from abandonment and social decay and locate them into a larger ideological and socioeconomic context.

Time, history and social change are also lived, culturally mediated categories. These pages have targeted the interaction between local and globalised perceptions and constructions of these categories.

In the Valley of Lillet, the last thirty years have been characterised by the implementation of a large number of protected areas, ski resorts and ecotourism infrastructures. I have qualified this process, common in many other mountainous regions of the developed world, as a postmodern takeover.

Parks are a creation of the state: an external and centralised political power emanating from urban settings and bound to serve its mostly urban constituency. The ideological values that sustain their creation, preservation, environmentalism and contemplation, serve the needs and expectations of a large urban population piled in cities eager for dramatic landscapes and weekend escapes.

Territory and natural resources are commodified not as spaces of extraction and transformation, but as spaces of contemplation, enjoyment and tranquillity. This transformation of the uses of the area does not necessarily imply a transformation of the values of the local population. These new uses are embraced as new productive alternatives regulated as much by market economy as any factory production. In other words, the scale of our analysis has an effect on the explanation of the social processes considered. Once we look at these valleys as peripheral parts of a global urban society, and if we frame our analysis in terms of local economic rationality, this postmodern appropriation appears as a change of productive practices but still remains inside an industrial, market-oriented, paradigm. The understanding of social processes of this nature needs to take into account the positionality of its participants and the scale of the analysis. Although the postmodernisation of the landscape is indeed happening, we cannot under-represent the significance of the permanence of elements labelled as belonging to past social formations. Simultaneity and local appropriation need to be considered seriously.

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8 It can be argued that only industrial life at its peak showed some signs of relative specialisation, translated, in particular, into an acute sexual division of labour: men used to work at the mines while women remained at the textile factories.

The analysis of the positionality of individuals gives us a key to interpret the multivocality of this landscape. Integrating a multiscalar perspective allows us to contextualise these interpretations within larger structural frameworks. Change and continuity, as they materialise in the landscape, are better understood as part of a succession of culturally mediated rational perceptions framed by structural limits. These processes do not presuppose a necessary 'development' or succession of social formations nor the predominance of some social traits over others.

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